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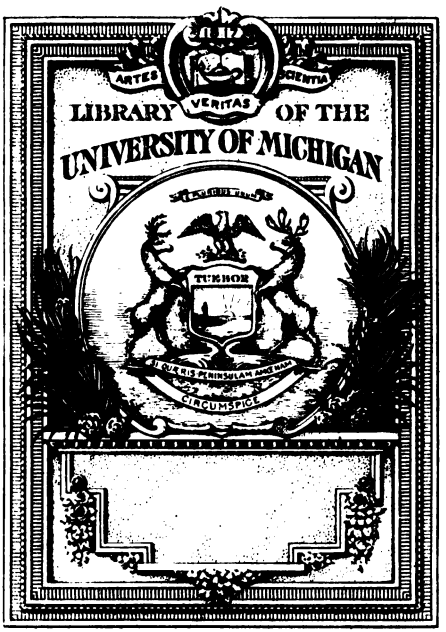
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American Actor Series

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AMERICAN ACTOR SERIES

CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN

BY

CLARA (ERSKINE) CLEMENT Watters

GENERAL LIBRARY University of MICHIGAN

With Illustrations

BOSTON
JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY
1882

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PREFACE.

HAPPY the biographer whose privilege it is to recount the life of one distinguished for genius and intellect, and at the same time for nobility of life and character. Such is my good fortune in writing of Charlotte Cushman. Her dramatic career will be the subject of this volume, and no space will be found for the picturing of her private life. There is, however, no regret felt on this account, since all that relates to Charlotte Cushman as a woman and as a friend belongs more especially to those who were near and dear to her, and all that concerns the outside world in this regard has been told by her chosen friend and biographer far more suitably than another could hope to tell it.

To Miss Stebbins I wish to express my thanks here for her generous assistance in placing so many of Miss Cushman's private letters at my

disposal. To. Mr. H. A. Clapp, Mr. Lawrence Barrett, Mr. Joseph N. Ireland, Mr. William Winter, Mr. George Vandenhoff, Mr. William T. W. Ball, Mr. Laurence Hutton, and to others also, I am indebted for much valuable information regarding my subject.

C. E. C.

BOSTON, 1882.

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CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

CHAPTER I.

1816–1836.

CHARLOTTE SAUNDERS CUSHMAN was born July 23, 1816, in Richmond Street, Boston, her home being next door to that of the comedian, John Gilbert, with whom she played as a child.* Her mother's maiden name was Mary Eliza Babbit, and both the Cushmans and the Babbits were honorably known among the early settlers of New England. Robert Cushman, the founder of the family in America, is credited with having preached the first sermon ever delivered in New England. Elkanah Cushman, the father of Charlotte, was of the seventh generation descended from this pioneer preacher.

Charlotte Cushman made some very short memoranda of her earliest remembrances, and began them with the declaration that she was born a tomboy. Almost immediately she speaks of her powers of imitation,

* In 1867 the "Cushman School" was erected on this spot.

which included not only the mimicking of people who struck her as peculiar, but also that of the cries of birds, the clucking of fowls, and the like. And these powers she did not disdain to use all her life, for the amusement of her friends, or, better, of children, whom she always loved.

During her school days she made her mark in theatricals in her mother's attic, and "brought down the house" as *Selim*, the lover, in "Blue Beard."

When Charlotte was but thirteen years old her father met with such reverses that she was obliged to leave school and seriously consider how she could best earn her own living. She had early shown a love for music, and her voice was considered worthy of cultivation. Her mother's friends afforded her the best means of instruction then at command. She sang more or less in church choirs; and on the following page is the programme of the first public concert at which she appeared, and in which she is announced simply as "a Young Lady."

At last it happened, in 1835, that Mrs. Wood, who appeared in Boston, required a contralto singer in her company. Charlotte Cushman was recommended by a friend. She went to the Tremont House to rehearse with Mrs. Wood, sang at one of her concerts, and from that hour her career as an artist began; for through Mrs. Wood's influence she became the pupil of James G. Maeder, and under his instruction prepared her first part for the public stage.

She made her professional début at the Tremont Theatre, in April, 1835, in the "Marriage of Figaro," Mrs.

SOCIAL CONCERT.

A VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL CONCERT

Will be given by a number of amateurs to their friends,

On Thursday Evening, March 25, 1830,

At the Hall, No. 1 Franklin Avenue, Boston. Mr. Farmer will preside at the piano-forte.

PART I.

OVERTURE, Piano-forte, Mr. Farmer, "Caliph of Bagdad."
SONG, by a Young Lady, "Take this Rose." Piano-forte accompaniment.
SOLO, Mr. Coupa. Guitar.
CHORUS, "Hunters' Chorus."
DUET, Mr. Pray and Mr. Chase. Flutes.
SONG, by a Young Lady, "Oh, Merry Row the Bonny Bark." Piano-forte accompaniment.
SONG, Mr. Coupa, "The Soldier's Adieu." Guitar accompaniment. Translation from the French.

PART II.

PIANO-FORTE, Mr. Farmer, Variations . . . . *G. Farmer.*
GLEE, "A Little Farm Well Tilled." By Messrs. Stedman, Barry, and Chase.
RONDO, Messrs. White and Coupa. Violin and Guitar . . . . . *Kuffner.*
TRIO, "Sweet Home."
SOLO, Flute, Mr. Pray, "O Dolce Concerto," with variations. Piano-forte accompaniment.
GLEE, "See Our Bark." Messrs. Stedman, Barry, and Chase.
SONG, by a Young Lady, "Farewell, My Love" . *G. Farmer.*

To commence at seven o'clock precisely.

A. S. CHASE, *Manager.*

Maeder (Clara Fisher) singing *Susanna*, and Charlotte the *Countess Almaviva*. Her second part was that of *Lucy Bertram*, in "Guy Mannering." She went with the Maeders to New Orleans, where, through Mr. Maeder's influence, she was engaged as first lady in the opera business of the St. Charles Theatre, where he was the musical director. Of this time in her life Mr. James E. Murdoch speaks as follows in his book called "The Stage:" "Being much in the society of the Maeders, I frequently met, and had ample opportunity for becoming acquainted with, the young opera singer, and for observing her disposition both off and on the stage. The first time I saw her professionally was in the character of *Patrick*, in the operatic farce of the 'Poor Soldier.' Miss Cushman, in the proper costume of her sex in private life, appeared self-reliant and of easy and agreeable manners, but in her soldier dress on the stage she challenged attention and asserted a power which impressed the beholder with an idea of fixed and determined purpose. Many years' acquaintance with Miss Cushman in public and in private life only confirmed the early impression made upon me by this great American actress.

"The St. Charles was one of the largest buildings of the kind in the United States, and the powers of a speaker or singer were taxed to the utmost for the production of the best vocal effects; and in consequence of the vigor of Miss Cushman's efforts to carry the citadel by storm rather than by cautious approaches, in a short time she broke down her voice and destroyed her prospects as a singer. Her instructor had frequently

warned her against the folly of attempting the accomplishment of what was not within the legitimate limits of her vocal powers; he had cautioned her against her tendency to undue force of expression, as calculated to produce throaty tones injurious to the voice. 'But,' said Mr. Maeder, 'the young lady knew better than her teacher; she was almost insane on the subject of display and effect, and altogether too demonstrative in the way of commanding what is only to be obtained slowly and patiently, — operatic success.' Thus Miss Cushman, disregarding the injunction of an experienced and thoroughly trained master of music, by her impatience of restraint, ruined a fine voice, destroying all hope of operatic honors, and was compelled to turn her attention to the drama."

There always remained in Miss Cushman's voice a certain quality of tone which was probably the result of this early abuse of it, — a quality well suited to the deep passions portrayed in her strongest parts.

At this point she consulted Mr. Caldwell, then manager of the principal theatre in New Orleans; and he advised her to give up the thought of singing, and study to be an actress. She was then presented to Mr. Barton, the leading man of Mr. Caldwell's company, and after a short time, when Mr. Barton was to have a benefit, he arranged that she should act *Lady Macbeth* to his *Macbeth*. Of this we have an account in Miss Cushman's own words: "Upon this it was decided that I should give up singing and take to acting. My contract with Mr. Maeder was annulled, it being

the end of the season. So enraptured was I with the idea of acting this part, and so fearful of anything preventing me, that I did not tell the manager I had no dresses, until it was too late for me to be prevented from acting it; and the day before the performance, after rehearsal, I told him. He immediately sat down and wrote a note of introduction for me to the tragedienne of the French Theatre, which then employed some of the best among French artists for its company. This note was to ask her to help me to costumes for the rôle of *Lady Macbeth*. I was a tall, thin, lanky girl at that time, about five feet six inches in height. The French woman, Madame Closel, was a short, fat person of not more than four feet ten inches, waist full twice the size of mine, with a very large bust; but her shape did not prevent her being a very great actress. The ludicrousness of her clothes being made to fit me struck her at once. She roared with laughter; but she was very good-natured, saw my distress, and set to work to see how she could help it. By dint of piecing out the skirt of one dress it was made to answer for an underskirt, and then another dress was taken in in every direction to do duty as an overdress, and so make up the costume. And thus I essayed for the first time the part of *Lady Macbeth*, fortunately to the satisfaction of the audience, the manager, and all the members of the company."

Thus, when nineteen years old, through her own determination, and unaided by any apparent power beyond that fortune which favors the brave, Charlotte Cushman's course in life was distinctly marked out

before her. Her name, Cushman, signified the *cross-bearer*, and was, among the crusaders, given to the man who was held to be most worthy of carrying the standard. Charlotte Cushman was the cross-bearer in the ranks of American actresses; she dignified and adorned this honorable office, and proved herself to be fully equal to its duties.

CHAPTER II.

1836–1840.

AT the end of the season in New Orleans, Miss Cushman went to New York, and immediately applied to Mr. Simpson, the manager of the Park Theatre, for an engagement. He offered her a trial, which she felt to be a slight; and before any decision had been made in the matter, Mr. Thomas Hamblin, manager of the Bowery Theatre, called on her and requested her to rehearse for him, saying that Mr. Barton had spoken so favorably of her that he hoped to engage her.

She recited parts of several plays, and he offered her a three years' engagement, at twenty-five dollars a week for the first year, with an increase of ten dollars a week each year. She at once accepted, not knowing then what she so well realized later, — that a second place in a first-rate theatre would have been much more to her advantage than a leading position in a theatre of lower standing.

A difficulty now arose concerning her wardrobe, which was finally arranged by Mr. Hamblin's becoming responsible for Miss Cushman, retaining five dollars a week of her salary. Her affairs then seemed so promising that Charlotte sent for her mother to come with her younger children to New York. Her unusual

cares and anxieties had told upon her vigorous health, and one week before her engagement was to begin Miss Cushman was seized with chills and fever, and was prevented from making her appearance until three weeks after the time intended. As she was to have acted but one month at the Bowery Theatre, and then at some other house, she had now but a single week in which to gain a place with the New York public. Her first night, September 12, 1836, she acted *Lady Macbeth* to Mr. Hamblin's *Macbeth*, with H. B. Harrison as *Macduff;* on the 13th she personated *Helen Macgregor* and *Mrs. Haller;* and finally took her first benefit as *Alicia* in "Jane Shore," with Mr. Harrison as *Gloster*, Mr. Hamblin as *Hastings*, and Miss Ann Duff Waring as *Jane Shore.* This exertion induced a return of illness, and Miss Cushman was again confined to her bed; and, not considering her claim upon her wardrobe as sufficient to allow her to control it, she left it in the theatre, which was burned a few days after. Thus was unhappily ended her first three years' contract, and she was left as unprovided for as before it was made, with the additional burden of her family on her hands.

She next sent to the manager of the principal theatre in Albany, and obtained a five weeks' engagement with him. Her mother and younger brother accompanied her to that city, where she became a favorite, and where her mother's cousin, Governor Marcy, did much for her by his influence and position. Going there for five weeks, she remained five months, and acted in a variety of parts. At the end of that time her little

brother was killed by an accident, being thrown from a horse she had given him. In her "Recollections," when speaking of this death and the grief it caused her, Miss Cushman says: "And I determined then, that, knowing very little of my art as art, I would seek to place myself in a position where I could learn it thoroughly. I became aware that one could never sail a ship by entering at the cabin windows; he must serve, and learn his trade before the mast. This was the way that I would henceforth learn mine."

While in Albany, Miss Cushman was much in society, and is thus spoken of in an account of a great Fireman's Ball given in the theatre: "In all the freshness and bloom of youth, magnificently attired, her head adorned with an immense and beautiful Bird of Paradise, — as she threaded the mazes of the dance or moved gracefully in the promenade, her stately form towering above her companions, she was the observed of all observers, the bright particular star of the evening."

She herself related that it had often been jokingly remarked, that more members of the Senate and House of Representatives could be found at her benefits than at the Capitol.

The reason of Miss Cushman's remaining single has never been told to the world more plainly than she herself has told it in a letter referring to this winter in Albany. She writes: "There was a time in my life of girlhood when I thought I had been called upon to bear the very hardest thing that can come to a woman. A very short time served to show me, in the harder

battle of life which was before me, that this had been but a spring storm, which was simply to help me to a clearer, better, richer, and more productive summer. If I had been spared this early trial, I should never have been so earnest and faithful in my art; I should have still been casting about for the 'counterpart,' and not given my entire *self* to my work, wherein and alone I have reached any excellence I have ever attained, and through which alone I have received my reward. God helped me in my art-isolation, and rewarded me for recognizing *him* and helping myself. This passed on; and this happened at a period in my life when most women (or children, rather) are looking to but one end in life, — an end, no doubt, wisest and best for the largest number, but which would not have been wisest and best for *my* work, and so far for God's work; for I know he does not fail to *set* me his work to do, and helps me to do it, and helps others to help *me*. . . .

"Then after this first spring storm and hurricane of young disappointment came a lull, during which I actively pursued what became a passion, — my art. Then I lost my younger brother, upon whom I had begun to build most hopefully, as I had reason. He was by far the cleverest of my mother's children. He had been born into greater poverty than the others; he received his young impressions through a different atmosphere; he was keener, more artistic, more impulsive, more generous, more full of genius. I lost him by a cruel accident, and again the world seemed to *liquefy* beneath my feet, and the waters went over

my soul. It became necessary that I should suffer *bodily* to cure my heart-bleed. I placed myself professionally where I found and knew all the mortifications in my profession, which seemed for the time to strew ashes over the loss of my child-brother (for he was my child, and loved me best in all the world), thus conquering my art, which, God knows, has never failed me, — never failed to bring me rich reward, never failed to bring me comfort. I conquered my grief and myself. *Labor* saved me then and always, and so I proved the eternal goodness of God."

As the result of her determination to study her art more thoroughly, she made a three years' engagement with Mr. Simpson of the Park Theatre, New York, as "walking lady" and for "general utility business," to commence in September, 1837. This agreement was carried out, and ended in September, 1840.

Meantime, during the spring and summer of 1837, she acted a few times in New York and Boston, and made a starring engagement in Buffalo and Detroit. Of her appearance in Boston, W. W. Clapp, in the "Records of the Boston Stage," says: —

"In the months of May and June, in 1837, Miss Charlotte Cushman gave the earliest taste of that dramatic spirit which she has since cultivated to so much advantage. On the 30th of May she appeared as *Lady Macbeth* to Barry's *Macbeth*, and astonished every one. She followed up her first triumph by playing *Portia* to C. H. Eaton's *Shylock*, and also performed *Fortunato Falconi*, *Elvira*, and *Morgiana*; she announced thus early her predilections for male parts

by a performance of *Henry* in 'Speed the Plough.' Although she had given up, by her assumption of these, all hopes of attaining eminence in the lyric drama, she sung 'Hail Columbia' on Murdoch's benefit night, and was rapturously applauded."

It is difficult to conceive how any actress can go through the amount of labor which Charlotte Cushman performed during her three years at the Park Theatre, New York. In those days long runs were unknown, and would have been regarded as innovations which denoted want of capacity in managers and actors. The public must have novelty; this was supplied by a change of bill each night, while it was not at all unusual to give two or three plays in an evening.

When she finished her engagement at the Park she had been on the stage about four years, and had appeared in the following parts: *Lady Macbeth*, in "Macbeth;" *Count Belino*, in "The Devil's Bridge;" *Helen Macgregor*, in "Rob Roy;" *Alicia*, in "Jane Shore;" *Henry*, in "Speed the Plough;" *Floranthe*, in "The Mountaineers;" *Mrs. Haller*, in "The Stranger;" *Mrs. Lionel Lynx*, in "Married Life;" *Joan*, in "Joan of Arc;" *Margaret*, in "Margaret of Burgundy;" *Jack Horner*, in "Greville Cross, or the Druids' Stone;" *Louise*, in "Norman Leslie;" *Emilia*, in "Othello;" *Alvedson*, in "The Two Galley Slaves;" *George Fairman*, in "The Liberty Tree, or Boston Boys in 1773;" *Lucy Clifton*, in "The Fiend of Eddystone;" *Henry Germain*, in "The Hut of the Red Mountain;" *Portia*, in "The Merchant of Venice;" *Julia*, in "The Hunchback;"

Tullia, in "Brutus;" *Zorilda*, in "Timour the Tartar;" *Belvidera*, in "Venice Preserved;" *Roxana*, in "Alexander the Great;" *Romeo*, in "Romeo and Juliet;" *Elvira*, in "Pizarro;" *Goneril*, in "King Lear;" and *Queen Gertrude*, in "Hamlet."

It was at the Park Theatre that she acted *Goneril*, *Emilia*, and *Queen Gertrude* with Forrest, and won great applause. There is a disagreement among dramatic authors and critics as to the time when she first played *Meg Merrilies;* it has usually been given as in May, 1837, at the National Theatre, under the management of Mr. Hackett. I shall here quote Miss Stebbins in reference to this matter: —

"I have sought in vain among the newspaper files of the period for the absolute date of her first performance of this character; but other evidence settles it as having been in the year 1840–41, during Braham's first and only engagement in New York, and at the Park Theatre. Her own account of it was substantially as follows. But first it may be mentioned that there is one very ancient newspaper-cutting — which is, however, without name or date — in which the fact of her assumption of the part, at a moment's notice, is thus alluded to: 'Many years ago Miss Charlotte Cushman was doing at the Park Theatre what in stage parlance is called "general utility business;" that is, the work of three ordinary performers, — filling the gap when any one was sick, playing this one's part and the other's on occasion, never refusing to do whatever was allotted to her. As may be supposed, one who held this position had as yet no position to be proud

of. One night "Guy Mannering," a musical piece, was announced. It was produced by Mr. Braham, the great English tenor, who played *Harry Bertram*. Mrs. Chippendale was cast for *Meg Merrilies*, but during the day was taken ill; so this obscure utility actress, this Miss Cushman, was sent for and told to be ready in the part by night. She might read it on the boards if she could not commit it. But the "utility woman" was not used to reading her parts; she learned it before nightfall, and played it after nightfall. She played it so as to be enthusiastically applauded. At this half-day's notice the part was taken up which is now so famous among dramatic portraitures.'

"It *was* in consequence of Mrs. Chippendale's illness that she was called upon on the very day of the performance to assume the part. Study, dress, etc., had to be an inspiration of the moment. She had never especially noticed the part; as it had been heretofore performed there was not probably much to attract her; but as she stood at the side-scene, book in hand, awaiting her moment of entrance, her ear caught the dialogue going on upon the stage between two of the gypsies, in which one says to the other, alluding to her, '*Meg*, — why, she is no longer what she was; she doats,' etc., evidently giving the impression that she is no longer to be feared or respected, that she is no longer in her right mind. With the words a vivid flash of insight struck upon her brain. She saw and felt, by the powerful dramatic instinct with which she was endowed, the whole meaning and intention of the character; and no doubt from that moment it became what

it never ceased to be, a powerful, original, and consistent conception in her mind. She gave herself with her usual concentrated energy of purpose to this conception, and flashed at once upon the stage in the startling, weird, and terrible manner which we all so well remember. On this occasion it so astonished and confounded Mr. Braham — little accustomed heretofore to such manifestations — that he went to her after the play to express his surprise and his admiration.

"'I had not thought that I had done anything remarkable,' she says, 'and when the knock came at my dressing-room door, and I heard Braham's voice, my first thought was, Now what have I done? He is surely displeased with me about something, — for in those days I was only the utility actress, and had no prestige of position to carry me through. Imagine my gratification when Mr. Braham said: "Miss Cushman, I have come to thank you for the most veritable sensation I have experienced for a long time. I give you my word, when I turned and saw you in that first scene I felt a cold chill run all over me. Where have you learned to do anything like that?"'"

But the part in which she made the greatest impression while at the Park, was that of *Nancy Sikes*, in "Oliver Twist." After her appearance in that character the public knew her for an actress of high grade. Of her assumption of this part, Francis Courtney Wemyss says, in his "Theatrical Biography:" "At length *Nancy Sikes*, in 'Oliver Twist,' gave her an opportunity of proving what she was capable of accomplishing. As a portrait of female depravity it was pain-

fully correct, and in all her future career she never surpassed the excellence of that performance."

It is known that this character was not one that Miss Cushman would have chosen; for, true as it is to life, and deep as is the lesson it teaches, — appreciated for its dreadful faithfulness when read as the great novelist wrote it, — it is yet one of a class of characters not generally approved when seen upon the stage. But when she acted it she brought to it all her strength; she did not hesitate to go thoroughly into its lowest depths with the same power as that with which she ascended to lofty heights in her personation of *Queen Katherine* and other noble women. The effect she produced in it was such that frequently, in later years, her managers begged for its reproduction.

In the assumption of male characters Miss Cushman was very successful; her *Romeo* will be spoken of later; she is the only woman who ever acted the rôle of *Cardinal Wolsey*.

It is to be regretted that the printed records of this time in her life are few. One testimonial of value is found in a *Boston Journal* of 1863, in which the writer, an Englishman, gives a résumé of his former impressions of Miss Cushman's acting, and says, in speaking of a time more than twenty years past: —

"In one of my evening rambles about the city [New York] I found myself passing the Park Theatre, and I was moved to go in. There was little, I confess, in outward appearance that was cheerful or exciting. The scenery was poor, tawdry, and inappropriate; the lights were dim, and the audience not large. The play was

'Othello,' and on the whole the performance was spiritless. In the part of *Emilia* I saw a large-sized, fair-complexioned young woman, not of handsome but of impressive presence. The effect of her denunciation of the *Moor*, after the murder of *Desdemona*, was electric. The few lines of high passion which the part contains, by the power with which the actress delivered them, made the part, insignificant though it is, the leading one on that occasion. By looking at the bill I found the name of this actress was Charlotte Cushman. She was rapturously applauded, and this was the only hearty applause that was given during the evening. I knew that there was no ordinary artist in this then comparatively unknown young woman. I saw her next as *Lady Macbeth*, and my conviction was only the more confirmed by this terrible test of any genius. I went away filled with admiration, resolved to see this powerful actress as often as I should have the opportunity. I then foresaw her fame, and time has justified my prophecy. I saw her frequently afterward, when she played with Mr. Macready, and even with this great and cultivated artist she held her own. She had not had his experience, but she had genius. There were times when she more than rivalled him; when in truth she made him play second. I observed this in New York, and a critic in the *Times* bore witness to it in London. I have seen her throw such energy, physical and mental, into her performance as to weaken, for the time, the impression of Mr. Macready's magnificent acting. She profited, no doubt, by his admirable ability and veteran experience, but she

nevertheless always preserved her own independence and thorough individuality."

While Miss Cushman was at the Park Theatre her sister Susan made an unfortunate marriage, and by the desertion of her husband was left in destitute circumstances with a child. Through the influence of Charlotte she was led to cultivate her talent for the stage, and was engaged at a small price by the managers with whom her sister made contracts. I take the following from an interesting article which appeared in *Appleton's Journal* of March 21, 1874: —

"Charlotte urged the manager to increase their salaries, — hers to twenty-five dollars a week, her sister's to twelve. Mr. Simpson refused, and the Cushman sisters left him and went into the stock company of Burton's theatre at Philadelphia. It was not long before she was called back to the Park at her own terms; it was found difficult to replace one who did so many things thoroughly well.

"In a few months, however, there was a further feud with the manager, and Charlotte felt and exercised her power, for it was on her sister's account and not her own. A certain New York journalist had a lady friend whom he wished to have Mr. Simpson engage for his company. The good parts of Susan Cushman would suit the new-comer. Journalists then, as now, had a very potent method of enforcing their wishes with theatrical managers, and the latter were perhaps even more obsequious. So Mr. Simpson obeyed the dictate of the critic, and announced the change to Miss Charlotte Cushman. The latter protested with stormy and reso-

lute words, and at last threatened to resign. The manager was in a quandary; he could not afford to offend his editorial friend, neither would it do to drive away the most useful member of his company.

"The critic, of course, heard of the turmoil, and addressed a letter to Charlotte, in which he threatened that 'if Miss Cushman did not tread carefully she should be driven from the stage, if there was any virtue in a New York audience or power in the New York press.' This audacious impertinence roused the high-spirited actress to the extreme pitch of indignation. She took the matter to a very prominent editor for advice. He prepared an article in which the case was fully characterized in the language it deserved, and it was printed in the morning issue. That night a tremendous audience gathered to see our actress in the character of *Lady Gay Spanker*. The interest was generally heightened by an anticipation of something like a row, or, at least, a powerful *claque* organized to hiss down the heroine of the evening; but when, in the play, *Max Harkaway* says, 'Look! look! here comes *Lady Gay Spanker* across the lawn at a hand-gallop,' there was such a stormy shout of acclamation as set forever at rest any doubts of the hold of Miss Cushman on the public."

CHAPTER III.

1840–1844.

AFTER leaving the Park Theatre the sisters acted for some time in Philadelphia. Charlotte frequently took male characters in order to give Susan the principal female parts, and in this way they were successful. Later, in New York, in the season of 1841–42, they played together at the Park upwards of ninety nights. The opening night, August 30, "Midsummer Night's Dream" was given for the first time in fifteen years. Miss Cushman appeared as *Oberon* and Susan as *Helena*. On the 28th of September a committee of ladies got up a complimentary benefit for her old friend Mrs. Maeder, on which occasion Miss Cushman took the part of the *Hon. Mrs. Glenroy*, in "Town and Country," while Susan acted *Emily*, in the farce of the "Bee-hive."

On Oct. 11, 1841, previous to the evening referred to in the last chapter, Boucicault's comedy of "London Assurance" was produced for the first time in the United States. The scenery, furniture, and appointments were finer than any that had before been used on the American stage. The play proved so popular that it was repeated nearly fifty times. It was cast as follows: —

Sir Harcourt Courtly	Henry Placide.
Charles Courtly	Wm. Wheatley.
Dazzle	James S. Browne.
Max Harkaway	John Fisher.
Dolly Spanker	W. H. Williams.
Mark Meddle	W. H. Latham.
Cool	A. Andrews.
Lady Gay Spanker	Miss Cushman.
Grace Harkaway	Miss Clarendon. / Miss Buloid.
Pert	Mrs. Vernon.

This season was a successful one for the sisters, and Charlotte added several new parts to the large number she had previously acted.

In the winter of 1842 Miss Cushman assumed the management of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. She opened, September 22, with "The Belle's Stratagem" and "A Nabob of an Hour." I can find no programme of that night, but her company included Messrs. W. Chippendale, Wm. S. Fredericks, and Wm. Wheatley, with Alexina Fisher, the Vallée sisters, and Susan Cushman. The Chestnut Street Theatre was at this time leased by Miss Mary Maywood, and naturally there was considerable emulation between the "rival queens," as Miss Cushman and Miss Maywood were called.

A single season as manager seems to have satisfied Miss Cushman. The next year Mr. W. R. Blake relieved her at the Walnut Street Theatre, and this left her more leisure and energy to devote to her acting; for it was not possible, even with her vigor, to do more than one thing at a time. The fact of her having

attempted it may in some measure account for the deficiencies in her personations, noted by Mr. George Vandenhoff, who played at her theatre early in October, 1842. He writes: —

"Charlotte Cushman, whom I met now for the first time, was by no means then the actress which she afterwards became. She displayed at that day a rude, strong, uncultivated talent. It was not till after she had seen and acted with Mr. Macready — which she did the next season — that she really brought artistic study and finish to her performances. At this time she was frequently careless in the text, and negligent of rehearsals. She played the *Queen* to me in 'Hamlet,' and I recollect her shocking my ear, and very much disturbing my impression of the reality of the situation, by her saying to me in the Closet scene (Act III.),

'What wilt thou do? thou wilt not *kill* me?'

instead of

'What wilt thou do? thou wilt not *murder* me?'

thus substituting a weak word for a strong one, diluting the force and destroying the rhythm of the verse. She was much annoyed at her error when I told her of it; but confessed that she had always so read the line, unconscious of being wrong.

"I played *Rolla* with her, and she was even then the best *Elvira* I ever saw. The power of her scorn and the terrible earnestness of her revenge were immense. Her greatest part — ~~fearfully natural, dreadfully intense, horribly real~~ — was *Nancy Sikes*, in the dramatic version of 'Oliver Twist.' It was too true,

it was painful, this actual presentation of Dickens's poor, abandoned, abused, murdered outcast of the streets, — a tigress with a touch, and but one, of woman's almost deadened nature, blotted and trampled under foot by man's cruelty and sin.

"It is in darkly shadowed, lurid-tinged characters of a low order, like this and *Meg Merrilies*, — half human, half demon, — with the savage animal reality of passion, and the weird fascination of crime, redeemed by fitful flashes of womanly feeling, that she excels. . . . *Meg Merrilies* has been her great *fortune-teller* and *fortune-maker*. . . .

"Looking over my papers, I find a most characteristic note from her to me during the above engagement at Philadelphia, which — for it contains nothing confidential — I give my readers as a curiosity. It is written in a bold, masculine hand, something 'like the hand that writ it.' The italics mark the words which were underscored heavily.

'WEDNESDAY NIGHT, Half past 2.

'MON AMI, — After a late supper, prepared for you (but no one could get a sight of you all the evening), and studying a long part, I have to request a great favor of you, viz., to take the enclosed packet for me to Boston. I have to-day written some three or four letters — not of introduction (that might *offend* you), but calculated to do you some service — *to* Boston. I shall only be too proud if they are of any service to you; for, without nonsense, I have scarcely ever seen one I should be more sincerely happy to serve than yourself, — *and no*

humbug! It is a matter of indifference to *me* whether you believe this or not — *I feel it* — and so *God bless you!* till we meet again. You shall hear from me shortly, — and believe me

'Sincerely your friend,

'CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

'P. S. Half asleep, a bad pen, no ink, no paper, and as low-spirited as a *fiend!* All *excuses sufficient.*'"

Of her *Nancy Sikes*, Mr. Lawrence Barrett, who had appeared with her as *Fagin*, spoke to me, in substance, as follows: It was an astonishing thing, as well to those of the profession as to the public, — but the death scene was simply superlative in effect; she dragged herself on to the stage in a wonderful manner, and, keeping her face away from her audience, produced a feeling of chilly horror by the management of her voice as she called for *Bill*, and begged of him to kiss her. Mr. Barrett said, "it sounded as if she *spoke through blood*, and the whole effect was far greater than that which any other actress has ever made, with the sight of the face and all the horrors which can be added." This part was eminently her own creation, conceived at a time when she had had small opportunity for any good training.

It was in the season of 1842–43 that Miss Cushman first met Mr. Macready, whose influence was destined to be so greatly in her favor, by aiding in the fuller development of her talent, and by encouraging her to seek and to win fame in Great Britain. She always said that her professional life began when she met him.

In Macready's Diary, under date of October 23, he thus speaks of Miss Cushman, with whom he had acted for the first time: —

"The Miss Cushman who acted *Lady Macbeth* interested me much. She has to learn her art, but she showed mind and sympathy with me, — a novelty so refreshing to me on the stage."

In December, 1843, at Mr. Macready's request, Miss Cushman went to the Park Theatre in New York, and acted *Evadne* to his *Melantius*, in Knowles's tragedy of "The Bridal." She also appeared as *Beatrice* to his *Benedick* the first time he acted that part; and finally, on December 15, — Macready's benefit night and farewell before going South, — his adaptation of Byron's "Marino Faliero" was given with this cast: —

Marino Faliero	Mr. Macready.
Bertuccio Faliero	A. Andrews.
Leoni	Henry V. Lovell.
Benintende	Wm. A. Vache.
Michel Steno	Mr. Toomer.
Israel Bertuccio	John Ryder.
Philip Calandero	Thos. A. Lyne.
Dagolino	Wm. Wheatley.
Vincenza	John Crocker.
Battista	Henry Hunt.
Angiolina	Miss Cushman.
Marianna	Miss Cecelia McBride.

After her first appearance with Mr. Macready, Miss Cushman wrote to her mother: "In great haste I write only a few words, with a promise to write again to-night after the play, and tell you all particulars of my great and triumphant success of last night, — of

my reception, of being called out after the play, and hats and handkerchiefs waved to me, flowers sent to me, etc."

In the "Cushman Genealogy" there is an interesting account of her, in which we read: —

"This engagement forms an era in the history of Miss Cushman of no slight importance, and one of which, we may say with propriety, she had great reason to be proud. It will be admitted by all that the eminent position of that great master, the professional station of Mr. Macready, was the foremost in the art; that he might have chosen from the world any partner in his triumphs he chose; and that the choice from so distinguished a person necessarily conveyed a compliment of no insignificant order. Choosing Miss Cushman, he selected her from all the world, and together they achieved wonders.

"Their engagement together in Boston at the Melodeon, which concluded at the middle of October, 1844, was the most brilliant theatrical engagement ever played in that city, in many respects; and it certainly will not be denied that during its continuance persons visited the theatre who had never countenanced dramatic representations, and whose lofty souls found sweeter communion with the bards in the closet than with their mutilation upon the stage. Frequently visiting the Melodeon might be seen such lights of the age as the Hon. Daniel Webster, the Hon. Charles Sumner, Judges Story and Shaw, the "Old Man Eloquent," Professor Henry W. Longfellow, — all listeners and admirers as well of Miss Cushman as of Mr. Macready."

The newspapers of the time were unsparing in her praise, and one of them thus spoke of her: —

"Miss Cushman possesses the elements of a fine actress; with an imposing person, she has a vigorous mind; she can conceive forcibly and utter nobly. By her careful preparation she shows that she loves her art; and therefore her industry is equal to her enthusiasm. Those who labor to reach an elevated standard, in every effort to satisfy themselves, will gain success with others. Miss Cushman makes progress in this onward course; she grows daily in favor, and yet favor must increase rapidly if it outrun her merits. Although characters of a solemn and tragic order suit her best, in the most austere impersonations gleams are ever and anon let in upon the darkness, which reveal a gentle and kindly womanhood."

Miss Cushman now decided to go to England, and made her farewell appearance at the Park Theatre, New York, Oct. 25, 1844. The play was "Much Ado About Nothing," and Mr. Vandenhoff acted *Benedick* to her *Beatrice*. In his Note Book he thus speaks of it: —

"The house was by no means full; and she played *Beatrice*, that night, carelessly or over-anxiously, I don't know which, — the effect of either is much the same. I recollect particularly, that she ran part of one act into another in a scene with me, in a very perplexed and perplexing manner. When we came off she exclaimed:

"'For heaven's sake, what have I been doing?'

"'Knocking the fourth and fifth acts together extemporaneously,' I replied.

"The fact is, she was disappointed with the house, the result being then of some moment to her. That audience little dreamt with what an accession of reputation and fortune she would return amongst them!"

To those who only knew Miss Cushman in later years it seems incredible that she should ever have acted all the parts that have been named in this and the preceding chapters; not only on account of the immense labor they required, but also from the apparent unsuitableness of many of them to her powers as they appeared when grandly developed and when, with the repertoire of *Lady Macbeth*, *Meg Merrilies*, and *Queen Katherine*, she had the world at her feet.

Some of Miss Cushman's admirers seem to be mistaken in supposing that she reached her height at this early date, — at a bound, so to speak. It is certainly more logical, as well as more creditable to her, to say that from year to year her appreciation and rendering of these great characters grew brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. And thus it was; for many who had always praised and loved her know that never was she so grand, never so much the noble queen, as when, in her last appearance as *Katherine* in Boston, these words rang out: —

> "I will not tarry; no, nor ever more,
> Upon this business, my appearance make
> In any of their courts."

The following lines, bearing Miss Cushman's name and printed in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, are supposed to have been written about this time: —

LINES BY CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

SUGGESTED BY A VISIT TO THE SHAKER SETTLEMENT, NEAR ALBANY.

Mysterious worshippers!
Are you indeed the things you seem to be,
Of earth, — yet of its iron influence free
From all that stirs
Our being's pulse, and gives to fleeting life
What well the Hun has termed "the rapture of the strife"?

Are the gay visions gone,
Those day-dreams of the mind by fate there flung,
And the fair hopes to which the soul once clung,
And battled on?
Have ye outlived them, — all that must have sprung
And quickened into life when ye were young?

Does memory never roam
To ties that, grown with years, ye idly sever;
To the old haunts that ye have left forever,
Your early homes;
Your ancient creed, once faith's sustaining lever;
The loved who erst prayed with you — now may never?

Has not ambition's pæan
Some power within your hearts to wake anew
To deeds of higher emprise — worthier you,
Ye monkish men,
Than may be reaped from fields? Do ye not rue
The drone-like course of life ye now pursue?

The camp, the council, — all
That wooes the soldier to the field of fame,
That gives the sage his meed, the bard his name
And coronal,
Bidding a people's voice their praise proclaim, —
Can ye forego the strife, nor own your shame?

Have ye forgot your youth,
When expectation soared on pinions high,
And hope shone out on boyhood's cloudless sky,
Seeming all truth;
When all looked fair to fancy's ardent eye,
And pleasure wore an air of sorcery?

You, too! What early blight
Has withered your fond hopes, that ye thus stand,
A group of sisters, 'mong this monkish band?
Ye creatures bright!
Has sorrow scored your brows with demon hand,
Or o'er your hopes passed treachery's burning brand?

Ye would have graced right well
The bridal scene, the banquet, or the bowers
Where mirth and revelry usurp the hours;
Where, like a spell,
Beauty is sovereign, where man owns its powers,
And woman's tread is o'er a path of flowers.

Yet seem ye not as those
Within whose bosoms memories vigils keep:
Beneath your drooping lids no passions sleep;
And your pale brows
Bear not the tracery of emotion deep, —
Ye seem too cold and passionless to weep!

CHAPTER IV.

1844–1847.

When Macready bade Miss Cushman good-bye, his last words to her were, "Come to England, where your talents will be appreciated at their true value."

It is doubtful if without his encouragement Miss Cushman would have taken this great step; for we know from her own records of this time that she was herself very doubtful as to what manner of reception she should meet with: and, in fact, she was careful, out of the small sum which she had saved, to keep enough in hand to bring her home again in case of her failure.

In her diary, kept during her voyage, she records her doubts and fears, regrets her ambition, and questions whether it would not have been wiser for her to have remained content with the moderate competency which she was sure of at home, than to subject herself to "miserable, frightful uncertainty," and all the anxieties and labors which must ensue. Added to this was the ever haunting thought that all might end in a disaster that would weaken her hold upon the American public, and be worse than the mortification of a failure abroad.

She speaks with tender affection of her family, and of her deep sorrow at being separated from them by so

great a distance; but at length, before the voyage was over, her accustomed energy and will asserted themselves, and she determined not to acknowledge the possibility of mischance. She had sailed with the thought of a six months' absence. She now declares that, if she acts at all, she will not return to her home and friends until she has achieved such success as they would wish for her; and adds, that though a longer period than that mentioned would seem an age, yet she will summon patience to her aid, and conquer all.

In her diary she copied, as if for comfort and encouragement, that much prized sentence from "Hyperion:" "Look not mournfully into the past; it comes not back again. Wisely improve the present; it is thine. Go forth into the shadowy future without fear and with a manly heart." Also from Browning's "Paracelsus" the passage beginning, —

> "What though
> It be so? — if indeed the strong desire
> Eclipse the aim in me?"

One sentence from this passage was always a favorite of hers: —

> "Be sure that God ne'er dooms to waste
> The strength he deigns impart."

Miss Cushman reached England, Nov. 18, 1844. She was accompanied by the most faithful of waiting-women, Sally Mercer, who from that time was what Miss Cushman called her, "her right hand," as long as her mistress lived. After a week in Liverpool Miss Cushman went through Scotland with a party of

her fellow-passengers, and by the time she reached London was restored to health and spirits.

Miss Cushman showed much self-control and sagacity in her course concerning her appearance before the London public. After using such exertions as seemed proper to her, and failing to make an engagement, she went over to Paris, where Macready was acting with Miss Helen Faucit, under the management of Mr. Mitchell. Upon her arrival at Liverpool she had received letters from Mr. Macready, asking her to join him in Paris. He told her that he could not assure her leading parts, but she could make a beginning. She replied: "Can I have *Lady Macbeth?* I will accede to your wishes in all other things." This Macready could not promise, as Miss Faucit was already alarmed by the praises of Miss Cushman which she had heard from him.

So, as has been said, she went to Scotland, passed some time in London, and finally went to Paris, because she had time at command, and wished to see all she could of the world and of good acting. One writer, in speaking of this period, says: —

"Manager Mitchell had had some trouble with *la belle* Faucit, and was anxious to whip the fair rebel back into traces. So, at the instigation, perhaps, of Macready, he offered 'leading business' to Miss Cushman. The latter disdained to build her own promotion on the downfall of another. She could remain in obscurity, she could return to the old subordinate drudgery, but she could not soil her own fine sense of professional honor. She knew Macready's persistence

and magnetism, and rather than subject herself to more urging she fled back to England without another interview."

Concerning the manner of Miss Cushman's engagement with Maddox, the manager of the Princess's Theatre, there are two accounts. I shall give both of them. The first is, that when Maddox was to bring out Forrest he wished to engage Miss Cushman as his support, and that she replied to his proposition: "I will accede on certain conditions. In the first place, ten pounds a night; in the second, I must have one night before Forrest comes for my *début* in a great part. I will play *Bianca*." To these conditions Maddox finally assented. The writer continues: —

"That Thursday night, big with her fate, arrived, and the curtain went up on a cold and meagre audience. The first two acts passed tamely enough, for the company supporting her seemed utterly indifferent to their work; but in the third act the audience commenced to look at each other and wonder, and their hearts to burn. The passionate intensity of the *Bianca* electrified, too, the inert stocks with which she was surrounded, and they were involuntarily swept, by the magnetic power that seemed to radiate from her, into something like *rapport* in their own acting. But in the fourth act Miss Cushman carried everything before her. The mighty passion and agony of the last great scene was so overpowering that the actress fainted away at its close, and she had to be supported in front of the curtain to acknowledge the continued and tumultuous thunders of applause with which that English audience

welcomed the rise of another great light on their dramatic horizon.

"She slept that night with an infinite peace in her heart. The triumph that she had looked forward to and labored over for ten long years of anguish, suffering, toil, and want of appreciation, had at last come, and in such full measure as to gratify her utmost wishes."

The second account of the engagement is that of Mr. Vandenhoff, who gives it as from Maddox's own lips. If not as flattering to Miss Cushman, in one sense, as the above, it forcibly presents her wondrous power to make herself felt in spite of prejudices and adverse circumstances of any kind: —

"The manner in which she obtained her first engagement in London is so characteristic of the spirit and *pluck* of the woman, that I cannot resist telling it as it was related to me by Maddox, the manager of the Princess's Theatre (1845).

"On her first introduction to him Miss Cushman's personal gifts did not strike him as exactly those which go to make up a stage heroine, and he declined engaging her. Charlotte had certainly no great pretensions to beauty, but she had perseverance and energy, and knew that there was the right metal in her; so she went to Paris with a view to finding an engagement there with an English company. She failed, too, in that, and returned to England more resolutely than ever bent on finding employment there, because it was now more than ever necessary to her. It was a matter of life and death, almost. She armed herself, therefore,

with letters (so Maddox told me) from persons who were likely to have weight with him, and again presented herself at the Princess's; but the little Hebrew was as obdurate as *Shylock*, and still declined her proffered services. Repulsed, but not conquered, she rose to depart; but as she reached the door she turned and exclaimed: 'I know I have enemies in this country; but' (and here she cast herself on her knees, raising her clenched hand aloft) 'so help me ——! I 'll defeat them!' She uttered this with the energy of *Lady Macbeth*, and the prophetic spirit of *Meg Merrilies*. 'Helho!' said Maddox to himself, 's' help me! she 's got de shtuff in her!' and he gave her an appearance, and afterwards an engagement in his theatre."

Of her first appearance as *Bianca*, in "Fazio," the journals spoke with enthusiasm. The *London Sun* said: —

"America has long owed us a heavy dramatic debt for enticing away from us so many of our best actors. She has now more than repaid it by giving us the greatest of actresses, Miss Cushman. This lady made her first appearance before an English audience at Princess's Theatre last evening; and since the memorable first appearance of Edmund Kean, in 1814, never has there been such a *début* on the boards of an English theatre. She is, without exception, the very first actress that we have. True, we have very lady-like, accomplished, finished *artistes*, but there is a wide and impassable gulf between them and Miss Cushman, — the gulf which divides talent, even of the very highest order, from genius. That godlike gift is Miss Cushman's,

strictly speaking. She is no *artiste*, or if she is, hers is that highest reach of the art, *ars celare artem*."

The *Times* gave its verdict as follows: —

"The great characteristics of Miss Cushman are her earnestness, her intensity, her quick apprehension of 'readings,' her power to dart from emotion to emotion with the greatest rapidity, as if carried on by impulse alone. The early part of the play affords an audience no criterion of what an actress can do; but from the instant where she suspects that her husband's affections are wavering, and with a flash of horrible enlightenment exclaims, '*Fazio*, thou hast seen *Aldabella!*' Miss Cushman's career was certain. The variety which she threw into the dialogue with her husband — from jealousy dropping back into tenderness, from hate passing to love, while she gave an equal intensity to each successive passion, as if her whole soul were for the moment absorbed in that only — was astonishing, and yet she always seemed to feel as if she had not done enough. Her utterance was more and more earnest, more and more rapid, as if she hoped the very force of the words would give her an impetus. The crowning effort was the supplication to *Aldabella*, when the wife, falling on her knees, makes the greatest sacrifice of her pride to save the man she has destroyed. Nothing could exceed the determination with which, lifting her clasped hands, she urged her suit, — making offer after offer to her proud rival, as if she could not give too much, and feared to reflect on the value of her concessions, — till at last, repelled by the cold Marchioness and exhausted by her own passion, she sank huddled

into a heap at her feet. Of the whole after-part of the drama, which was distinguished throughout by a sustained energy, this was her great triumph. We need hardly say that Miss Cushman is likely to prove a great acquisition to the London stage. For passion — real, impetuous, irresistible passion — she has not at present her superior."

The *London Herald* said: —

"Miss Cushman is tall and commanding, having a fine stage figure. The expression of her face is curious, reminding us of Macready, — a suggestion still further strengthened by the tones of her voice, and frequently by her mode of speech. But that is nothing. She soon proved that she was a great artist on her own account; that she not only possessed peculiar sensitiveness, but that she had all the tact and efficiency resulting from experience. Her energy never degenerated into bombast, and rarely was she artificial. There are several situations in the tragedy requiring the most consummate skill on the part of the actress to render them fully effective, and she achieved at each successive point a fresh triumph. Her tenderness is beautifully energetic and impassioned, while her violence, such as when the sentiment of jealousy suddenly crosses her, is broad and overwhelming, but at the same time not overdone. Miss Cushman is altogether a highly accomplished actress, and it may be easily foreseen that her career in this country will be a most brilliant one."

She next appeared with Forrest in "Macbeth," and the honors of the night were hers, as on this occasion Forrest was received with marks of disapprobation;

which proves that the dislike of him was personal, and not a prejudice against American actors, since favors were at the same moment showered upon Miss Cushman.

This fact, however, led Forrest to believe that Miss Cushman had entered into a league against him, and from that moment there existed a fierce hatred between them. He never forgave the imaginary meanness he had imputed to her, and she disliked him heartily for thus misjudging her. She even went so far as to insist that he was not a good actor! And yet it is probable that somewhere, deep in their own hearts, they respected and admired each other, as is indicated by the following story. They both happened to be one evening at the same theatre when an autograph hunter presented himself to Miss Cushman and asked if she would write her name, adding that he should also ask the same favor of Mr. Forrest. Miss Cushman said: "Go first to him; I cannot take precedence of so great a man." The collector went as directed, and, without telling Mr. Forrest of the conversation, said he should also request Miss Cushman to write her name. Forrest then replied in almost the precise words that Miss Cushman had used, — that he would follow, not precede so great a woman.

Her engagement at the Princess's was continued through eighty-four nights. Under date of March 2, 1845, she wrote to her mother: —

"By the packet of the 10th I wrote you a few lines and sent a lot of newspapers, which could tell you in so much better language than I could of my brilliant and triumphant success in London. I can say no more to

you than this, — that it is far, far beyond my most *sanguine expectations*. In my most ambitious moments I never dreamed of the success which has awaited me and crowned every effort I have made. To you I should not hesitate to tell *all* my grief and all my failure if it had been such, for no one could have felt more with me and for me. Why then should I hesitate (unless through a fear that I might seem egotistical) to tell you all my triumphs, all my success? Suffice it, — *all my successes put together since I have been upon the stage* would not come near my success in London; and I only wanted some one of you here to enjoy it with me to make it complete."

On March 28, after telling of her many calls, invitations, and other personal compliments, she says: —

"It seems almost exaggerated, this account; but indeed you would laugh if you could see the way in which I am besieged, and if you could see the heaps of complimentary letters and notes you would be amused. All this, as you may imagine, reconciles me more to England, and now I think I might be willing to stay longer. If my family were only with me I think I could be content. Sergeant Talfourd has promised to write a play for me by next year. I have played *Bianca* four times, *Emilia* twice, *Lady Macbeth* six times, *Mrs. Haller* five, and *Rosalind* five, in five weeks. I am sitting to five artists, so you may see I am very busy. I hesitate to write even to you the agreeable and complimentary things that are said and done to me here, for it looks monstrously like boasting. I like you to know it, but I hate to tell it to you myself."

The engagements which Miss Cushman had made in Liverpool, Edinburgh, Dublin, and other cities were given up on account of her London success; and in the early summer her family went to her in England, and she established them in a house in Bayswater.

The opinions of the London press of that time upon her various personations are now a matter of history, and are of great interest, serving as they do to remind us that, great as she was in her few later characters, her power was not limited by them. Some of the most ably written criticisms are in part given here: —

"On Thursday night Miss Cushman gave us the first opportunity of seeing her in a Shakespearian character, — the sweet, merry, mocking, deep-feeling, true, loving *Rosalind*, whose heart and head are continually playing at cross-purposes; . . . whilst under her womanly guise the *Rosalind* of Miss Cushman was a high-bred though most gentle and sweet-tempered lady, with the mirthful spirit which nature had given to her saddened by the misfortunes of herself and father; but, with the indignant reply which she makes to the *Duke*, her uncle, on being banished as a traitor, this phase of her character disappears. No sooner is the plan of flight conceived and resolved upon, and the words uttered,

> 'Were it not better,
> Because that I am more than common tall,
> That I did suit me all points like a man?'

than all sadder thoughts disappear to make room for the overflowing spirits of the woman. Love itself is put as a mark to be shot at by wit; or rather it is love that arms wit against itself, and gives it all its point.

"But we hear some one say, 'You are speaking of *Rosalind*, instead of the lady who enacted the part on Thursday night.' We beg to say it is one and the same thing. If ever we looked upon, heard, conceived *Rosalind*, it was upon that occasion. If ever we listened to the playful wit, the sweet mocking, the merry laugh of *Rosalind*, if ever we saw her graceful form, her merry eye, her arched brows, her changing looks, it was then and there. Mrs. Nesbit's *Rosalind* was a sweet piece of acting, full of honey; Madame Vestris's *Rosalind* is all grace and coquetry; Miss Helen Faucit's (by far the best of them) is full of wit, mirth, and beauty; but Miss Cushman *was Rosalind*. . . . We must confess that, after seeing Miss Cushman in *Bianca* and *Mrs. Haller*, we thought her genius essentially tragic; and had we seen her only in *Rosalind*, we should have thought it essentially comic; but the fact is, as with Shakespeare himself, and most other great poets, the highest genius necessarily embraces both elements of tragic and comic. . . .

"Miss Cushman's features, if they are deficient in regular beauty, have that flexibility which makes every expression natural to them, and causes them to reflect each thought which passed through the author's brain as he drew the character. Never did we hear Shakespeare's language more perfectly enunciated. Not a syllable was lost, and each syllable was a note. The beauties of the author were as clear, as transparent, as though the thoughts themselves, instead of the words which are their vehicles, were transfused through the senses; eye, ear, heart, took them in, in that perfect form in which they were conceived.

"Now, what is the secret of Miss Cushman's success in characters so widely differing from each other as *Bianca, Lady Macbeth,* and *Rosalind?* It is earnestness. She is earnest in whatever she undertakes. She thinks nothing of individual self, but everything of that other self with which for the time she is identified, so that she becomes the very character which she represents; and no actor or actress who does not possess this power can ever become great."

At Bayswater Miss Cushman studied *Romeo,* and her sister Susan, *Juliet,* and after acting in Southampton they began their engagement with this tragedy, Dec. 30, 1845, at the Haymarket Theatre.

At first there was trouble concerning some deviations from the usual manner of playing it, which Miss Cushman insisted on. She was determined to follow the original Shakespeare. This was unusual, and the English support were not willing to be led by what they, in the usual manner of their countrymen at that period, chose to term "American Indians;" but the manager, Mr. Webster, supported Miss Cushman, and when she had made a grand success in her own way there was no more to be said. The play achieved what at that time was an almost unheard of popularity, and had a run of eighty nights in London. Naturally, after being thus sealed with the approbation of the metropolis, it was equally approved in the provinces.

It is said, by those who knew Miss Cushman best, that the assumption of male characters was not wholly agreeable to her. During her long and hard service in the "utility business" she had often to act such parts,

quite regardless of choice, and in so doing proved herself capable of that which she did later from love of her sister. She could give no prominent parts to Susan in most of the plays in which she appeared as leading lady; but in "Romeo and Juliet" the value of their parts was equal, while she was able by her instruction and support to place her sister at her very best, and in the result her self-sacrifice had its full reward. Of the press notices perhaps none was more valuable than that written by James Sheridan Knowles, which is given below: —

"I witnessed with astonishment the *Romeo* of Miss Cushman. Unanimous and lavish as were the encomiums of the London press, I was not prepared for such a triumph of pure genius. You recollect, perhaps, Kean's third act of "Othello." Did you ever expect to see anything like it again? I never did; and yet I saw as great a thing last Wednesday night in *Romeo's* scene with the *Friar*, after the sentence of banishment, — quite as great! I am almost tempted to go further. It was a scene of topmost passion; not simulated passion, — no such thing; real, palpably real. The genuine heart-storm was on, — on in wildest fitfulness of fury; and I listened and gazed and held my breath, while my blood ran hot and cold. I am sure it must have been the case with every one in the house; but I was all absorbed in Romeo, till a thunder of applause recalled me to myself. I particularize this scene because it is the most powerful, but every scene exhibited the same truthfulness. The first scene with *Juliet*, for instance, admirably personated by her beau-

tiful sister, was exquisitely faithful; the eye, the tone, the general bearing, — everything attesting the lover smit to the core at first sight, and shrinkingly and falteringly endeavoring, with the aid of palm and eye and tongue, to break his passion to his idol. My heart and mind are so full of this extraordinary, most extraordinary performance, that I know not where to stop or how to go on. Throughout it was a triumph equal to the proudest of those which I used to witness years ago, and for a repetition of which I have looked in vain till now. There is no trick in Miss Cushman's performance; no thought, no interest, no feeling, seems to actuate her, except what might be looked for in *Romeo* himself, were *Romeo* reality."

Still another is valuable, because it analyzes more thoroughly her manner of "being *Romeo:*"

"The glowing reality and completeness of Miss Cushman's performance perhaps produces the strength of the impression with which she sends us away. The character, instead of being shown to us in a heap of *disjecta membra,* is exhibited by her in a powerful light which at once displays the proportions and the beauty of the poet's conception. It is as if a noble symphony, distorted and rendered unmeaning by inefficient conductors, had suddenly been performed under the hand of one who knew in what *time* the composer intended it should be taken. Yet this wonderful completeness, though it may produce upon the public the effect of all high art, that of concealing the means by which it is obtained, ought not to render the critic unmindful of Miss Cushman's labors in detail. These should be

pointed out, not to diminish, but on the contrary to increase by explaining, her triumph; for had her superb conception not been seconded by the utmost exactitude of execution, the effect would have failed. Of this, however, there was no lack, nor is it for us to estimate the pains of a process by which so finished a work was achieved. It is for us merely to record that no symptoms of carelessness or haste appeared, no sentiment was slurred over or half comprehended, no passage slighted as of small importance. The intensity with which the actress has seized the character is grounded upon too reverent an appreciation of its creator's genius to allow her to sit in judgment on the means he has chosen for the accomplishment of his own purpose. The restoration of the plot and text of Shakespeare (thankfully as we receive it) is only a part of this demonstration of the honor in which he is held by the most admirable of his modern illustrators. It breathes through every line of the performance.

"All Miss Cushman's stage business is founded upon intellectual ideas, and not upon conventionalisms; but it is also most effective in a theatrical light. Her walk and attitudes are graceful; the manner in which the courtesy of the stage is given is very high-bred; her fencing is better than skilful, because it is appropriate. *Tybalt* is struck dead, as lightning strikes the pine; one blow beats down his guard, and one lunge closes the fray; indignation has for a moment the soul of *Romeo*. With *Paris* there is more display of swordsmanship; he falls by the hand of the lover, when 'as fixed, but far too tranquil for despair'; and the gestures,

eloquent as words, in the Garden scene, and the piteous lingering over the body of *Juliet*, are portions of the performance which are not likely to pass away from the memory of the spectator, who was compelled in the former to share the lover's enthusiasm, in the latter his agony."

After this successful winter in London (1846) the sisters fulfilled a six weeks' engagement in Dublin, and finished the season with a few nights in provincial towns.

CHAPTER V.

1847–1849.

In the spring of 1847 the sisters made a provincial tour, and again acted six weeks in Dublin, where Miss Cushman was always a favorite. She found something that especially appealed to her in the genuine Irish impulsiveness, and was able quickly to kindle a responsive sympathy in Irish audiences. She enjoyed the wit of this people, and had a fund of amusing anecdote of her experiences among them, with which she not infrequently entertained her friends in private — for she told stories well, and loved to tell them; and sometimes, for the select few, she added Irish songs, among which Lover's "Father Molloy" was a great favorite.

After Dublin, Miss Cushman and her sister acted in many of the principal towns throughout Great Britain, and finally at Liverpool, where they visited Seaforth Hall, the home of Mr. James Muspratt, whose son Miss Susan Cushman (or Mrs. Merriman) married on March 9, 1848.

Of this provincial tour I shall give no *critiques*, since they would be but a repetition of those of the London press. Miss Cushman won hosts of admirers among the general public, and many warm friends among those whom she met in private.

Before her sister's marriage they visited Paris, and Miss Cushman there became acquainted with Henry F. Chorley, Mrs. Hemans's biographer, and the musical critic of the *Athenæum*. He began very soon to talk and write to her of his play, "The Duchess Elinor," in which Miss Cushman took the principal character, but not until six or seven years later. It will be spoken of in its proper place; I refer to it here because it is so good an illustration of the continuance in a persistent struggle which is so often necessary before an author can attain a public hearing. It also shows the faithfulness of Miss Cushman's friendship, for she ever held herself ready to do her best for Mr. Chorley's heroine.

It is not inappropriate to give here one of the many notices which appeared on the occasion of Miss Susan Cushman's marriage. The following is from the *Theatrical Journal*:—

"In the United States, where Miss Susan Cushman passed the first six years of her professional life, she was well known as an artist of taste and judgment, and a highly accomplished woman. Her first appearance was at the Park Theatre, New York, in April, 1837, as *Laura Castelli*, in Mr. Epes Sargent's play, 'The Genoese:' and so immediate was her success, that she was on the fourth night cast for *Desdemona*, to the *Othello* of Mr. Vandenhoff, who was then starring in America. From New York she went to Philadelphia and played for some time with Mr. Ranger, now of the Haymarket Theatre, London. During her brief career she successively played the 'juvenile tragedy' and 'genteel comedy' business, as it is theatrically termed, to Mr.

James Wallack, Mr. Forrest, and Mr. Macready; and was the representative, in Philadelphia and New York, of the principal female parts of most of our recent dramas, — *Grace Harkaway* to her sister's *Lady Gay Spanker*, *Pauline* in the 'Lady of Lyons,' *Florentine* in 'Time Works Wonders,' *Julie de Mortemar*, *Lady Alice Hawthorn*, and *Satan in Paris!* The last of these characters had a remarkable triumph, and was played by her for many successive nights.

"In the 'Happy Man,' and in most of poor Power's best pieces, that delightful comedian has often declared that he never had a more clever supporter than Miss Cushman, who displayed a racy humor and a love of fun seldom looked for among the *Juliets* and *Desdemonas* of the stage. The former character was not one of this lady's American parts [?], but since her arrival in England she has actually performed that one character of *Juliet* upwards of *two hundred nights*."

The editor of the *Sun* paid her a delicate compliment when he said that she was "the most lady-like representative of the most lady-like character that Shakespeare ever drew."

During the year 1848 Miss Charlotte Cushman did not act as constantly as she had done before this time. She made several excursions to different parts of England, and appeared as *Queen Katherine* on the occasion of a benefit of Mr. Macready's at the Drury Lane Theatre on July 10, when "Henry VIII." and the "Jealous Wife" were acted. In "Macready's Diary" we read in a foot-note, by the Editor: —

"This night's performance at Drury Lane Theatre

was given by the special command of the Queen, and for Macready's benefit on the occasion of his approaching departure for America. The Queen Dowager, the Duchesses of Kent and Cambridge, and other members of the royal family were present, together with many representatives of political life, of art, and of literature."

Macready himself wrote: "On going to the stage, indeed, as it appeared from the beginning of the anthem, an organized disturbance, similar to that got up for the expulsion of the French actors, was violently persisted in by a few persons in the pit and the galleries. My reception was very great, and the house, with her Majesty and the Prince in state, was most brilliant. The noise continued through the scene; and in the next, wishing to ascertain the nature of the disturbance, I sent to ask leave to address the audience. The Queen granted it; and I told the galleries that, understanding they were incommoded for want of room, I had to assure them that, happy as I had been in receiving favors from them for many years, they would now add to my obligations by receiving their money and leaving the theatre. Applause but not tranquillity ensued, and it was only in the Banquet scene that the play began to be heard. I took great pains, both in *Cardinal Wolsey* and in *Mr. Oakley*. The Queen left at the end of 'The Jealous Wife,' and I was called on and most warmly greeted."

This is no place to comment upon this singular behavior of the British public in the presence of her Majesty, but it must have seemed odd to Miss Cushman.

The next day Macready published a card of thanks to Miss Cushman and others who had assisted him. It was certainly a great honor for an American actress to be cast in the leading part on such an occasion; and yet, in spite of all her triumphs, at times, all through Miss Cushman's life, she seemed to distrust herself. It was perhaps a secret of the continuous strength she showed, that she was never quite satisfied, and always anxious to exceed what might reasonably be expected of her. She always regretted the want of early systematic training, and prized the opportunity of seeing great actors. Of Rachel she wrote: "I used to look on in a perfect rapture of wonder and admiration at her unapproachable art; and often, as I left the theatre, and compared my own acting with hers, despair took possession of me, and a mad impulse to end life and effort together."

Her reverence and love for her art can in no way be so well told as in her own words: "I think I love and revere all arts equally, only putting my own just above the others, because in it I recognize the union and culmination of all. To me it seems as if when God conceived the world, that was Poetry; he formed it, and that was Sculpture; he colored it, and that was Painting; and then, crowning work of all, he peopled it with living beings, and that was the grand, divine, eternal Drama."

Having referred to Miss Cushman's admiration of Rachel, I will here quote a part of a very interesting paper, written by Madame de Marguerites, which appeared in *Sharpe's London Journal* in 1852,

entitled "Mademoiselle Rachel and Miss Cushman:" —

"It is impossible, in witnessing the performance of Charlotte Cushman, not to be reminded of Rachel; and though in many things they are dissimilar, yet the effect of their appearance is the same, — riveting the attention and interesting the mind from the first moment they come before you. The influence of that earnest and steady glance they both possess hushes at once to silence every trivial thought; then the deep tones, conveying a meaning in each syllable, arouse the elevated instincts of our nature; an awe, far above that felt for earthly potentates, comes over us; unconsciously the memory of heroic deeds, lifting us far above the dross of the wearing world, fills our soul. With eye uplifted, heart expanded, nerved to generous impulses alone, we feel, we recognize, that we are in the presence of genius, — genius that came from Heaven, but now rarely seen in a world possessed by a small, well-educated, and self-satisfied array of petty talent. . . . Both Rachel and Cushman, endowed with a strong will as well as high genius, have obtained the place they hold by long and arduous struggles. Neither possesses the one element to woman's celebrity, — personal beauty. . . . As a whole, perhaps, Rachel and Miss Cushman would not act a play alike. They are of different countries, have different educations, different associations; but there are touches of the same passions which, though in different dramas, are so much alike as to be almost miraculous. In vain the Atlantic divides and countries differ; genius knows

no limits and but one language, — that of truth and inspiration.

"There is a play in which Miss Cushman rarely appears, and perhaps for many reasons. As a whole the play is unsuited to her. This play is 'Love.' . . . In the scene where the *Countess* reveals her love to *Huon*, Miss Cushman attains the very highest and most refined range of art. That our feelings are not outraged, our habitual associations shocked, — but that, on the contrary, all our sympathies are aroused, our respect and pity enlisted for this woman who o'ersteps the modesty of nature, — is owing to the thorough sweetness and truth of the actress, to the tender delicacy she infuses into this one cry of a passion long pent up in a proud and bursting heart. So in 'Phèdre' — the revolting character of the scene, where she reveals her passion to *Hypolitus*, is lost in the struggling feelings of latent modesty and rising remorse which Rachel infuses into the bold declaration which, almost in spite of a better nature, seems to fall from her lips.

"*Phèdre* was a heathen heroine, and intended by Euripides and Racine to appeal to all our compassion as a victim of the vengeance of the gods; therefore Rachel has profoundly studied tradition and history in showing the struggle between the woman and the relentless fate which hurries her on, though she has entirely swerved from stage tradition (that which has clogged and crushed so many aspirations) in not making this scene from end to end one whirlwind of passion. Here, again, Charlotte Cushman has had the same inspiration, though it assumes a different form.

Pride, the pride of woman and high birth, combine to make the tender avowal difficult. Miss Cushman's reserve of manner, — almost entire absence of gesture, — while her words are warm and gushing; the utter shame which bids her, when she ceases, bury her woman's blushes in her hands, — are all such minute yet masterly touches which render the conception of the scene one of the great proofs of her genius and her versatility. That the mind which could conceive the fierce heroism of *Meg Merrilies*, and make the audience quail beneath her wild fury, should conceive, trace, and impersonate the holiest and gentlest, yet the tenderest of woman's sentiments, is, even in the annals of the gifted, remarkable.

"But people now-a-days go to see a play to learn the plot, to wait for one or two grand points and effects; not to follow closely each delineation of the passions before them, as all contributing and leading to the catastrophe, and testing and displaying the profound study and genius of the artist. In this has Rachel had less to contend with than the American actress. She appeals to an audience in whom, from the highest to the lowest, the dramatic taste is inherent, — an impulsive, imaginative and passionate people, ever ready to identify themselves with the drama, and capable of concentrating their attention exclusively on the characters and scenes before them. She acts, too, before an audience educated to attach importance to dramatic art as perpetuating the memory of glorious deeds, cultivating poetry and eloquence by rendering the flowers of language familiar, and rousing the better feelings of our

nature by appealing to our sensibilities, our intellect, and our hearts. She, too, plays to critics deep-learned in history, deep-skilled in metaphysical analysis, — critics who have studied art and are there to guide or restrain, critics whose art has a mission as high and distinguished as that of the artist himself. . . .

"But Charlotte Cushman, though she knows that but the louder tones of her voice will reach the masses, plays as though the whole artistic world were listening. Led on by genius, she loses sight of others' approval, and plays as she is inspired. Both Rachel and Charlotte Cushman have left tradition far behind them, for often they have found tradition at variance with feeling and truth.

"To follow both Rachel and Charlotte Cushman through all their impersonations would be too long an indulgence. One more example of the resemblance of their instincts, and we have done. Again the example is in 'Phèdre,' — the dying scene as contrasted with that of *Katherine of Aragon*, in 'Henry VIII.,' — and the death-scene is the most impressive of both plays. *Katherine* the Queen, oppressed by persecution, worn by slow malady, the lines of age and death marked on every feature of her face, is slowly borne into our presence. Those who have stood beside the death-bed of a beloved parent, and watched the slow approach of that crisis which is forever to end all sufferings, will instantly recall that hour when they watched the expiring Queen before them. The languid head seeking the support of the pillow, the husky voice, the uneasy movements of the hands, the pale and hollow cheek, are all

true, too true, to nature. Thus Rachel in 'Phèdre,' arrested, in the full force of youth and health, by the poison which circulates in her veins, her eye already glazing, her cheek pallid, her voice all changed, with faltering step is led on to die.

"Both the Christian and the heathen Queen have done with the world; what they have to say to those around is but a last duty in which they take no part; but one thought at last recalls the past to both. With the holy and resigned Christian woman, whose duties and affections had united, it is the remembrance of her child which animates the worn-out frame; a smile like a mild moon-beam once more plays over those features, and the voice, though plaintive, is yet sweet and clear; yet 't is but for a moment, and then she returns her thoughts to heaven, her mind to eternal rest.

"So *Phèdre*, exhausted by passion, tortured by bodily pain, falters out slowly, word by word, the confession of her passion and her crime; but as she speaks, her thoughts recur to that time when, sheltered by deep woods, she watched the swift car of *Hypolitus* flying before her admiring gaze; then, with this passion which has been her fate, again the eye kindles, again the voice grows firm and loud, her strength returns; and, following still her visions, with extended arm, nostrils dilated, and glance of fire, she rises from her chair. But the vision fades, the fictitious powers vanish, and she falls exhausted back to her place, in agony and despair, to give to the infernal gods her unquiet spirit.

"How like, and yet how different, is the same thought

which, moulded to the fashion of the character and circumstance, inspired both these women of genius! Time will scarcely mar any of the qualities of either of these great actresses. Europe has not tired of Rachel, and both America and Europe are always ready to welcome Miss Cushman; but when years and years are gone by, they will still be remembered, because the impression, on seeing both, is like an event of one's life; and as such will be related by the old to the younger, and thus their genius will live forever."

We may infer that Miss Cushman had doubted the wisdom of her acting *Queen Katherine*, from a note written to her by Chorley in October of the previous year (1847). He said: —

"Had I not found your note on coming home from the theatre, I *must* have written to you after the *Queen Katherine*, which I went to see quietly. You are wholly wrong *to fancy that the part does not do you good, and you good to the part.* What will you say when I tell you that it has given me a higher idea of your power than any I have yet seen you act? I like it all, — conception, execution, everything. I like the plainness, the simplicity, and the utter absence of all strain or solemnity.

"You know I am difficult, and little given to praising any one. Most of all was I delighted to hear how your level voice, when not forced, tells, and tells thoroughly. Now believe I don't say this to put you in good humor, or for any other reason than because it is honest and *must* come!

"As for the critics, remember that from time imme-

morial they have been always, at first, unjust to new and natural readings. The *house* shows how little harm or good they do, and of *its* humor there was no doubt; though people who have been wiping their eyes on apricot-colored bonnet-strings, as I saw one young lady of nature doing, can't find time or coolness to applaud anything as they ought. In short, I was pleased, *much* pleased, and shall tell you yet more about the same when I see you; and I am truly glad for your own sake that you have played the part."

About a year later, in August, 1849, Miss Cushman sailed for the United States.

CHAPTER VI.

1849–1852.

MISS CUSHMAN was heartily welcomed on her return to America. Her personal friends were proud of the way in which her noble and lovable character had been developed, and the public were proud that one of our countrywomen could thus command the admiration and praise of the British people and the British press, — a woman, too, whose whole education and dramatic experience had been acquired in America.

Her reappearance was made in the character of *Mrs. Haller*, on Oct. 8, 1849, at the Broadway Theatre, New York, under the management of Mr. E. A. Marshall. Mr. Charles Walter Couldock * had come from England to support Miss Cushman, and made his first appearance in this country as *The Stranger*.

Miss Cushman was enthusiastically received, and throughout this engagement, which lasted until October 27, she had large and appreciative houses. Her duties were not light, for in those few nights she acted *Rosalind, Lady Macbeth, Mariana, Julia, Queen*

* C. W. Couldock was born in London, April 26, 1815. He became an actor when twenty years old. He was the original *Abel Murcott*, in "Our American Cousin," at Laura Keene's Theatre in 1858. He has made a good American reputation, and is an excellent serious actor.

Katherine, *Juliana*, *Beatrice*, *Mrs. Simpson*, and *Meg Merrilies*. This last personation, which was so essentially the creation of Miss Cushman's genius, was everywhere very popular, and it is a matter of interest now to read and compare the testimony of various writers and critics concerning it.

William Winter says of it: —

"As an actress Miss Cushman was best in tragedy, whether lurid or pathetic, and in sombre melodrama. Theatrical history will probably associate her name more intimately with *Meg Merrilies* than with any other character. This production was unique. It embodied physical misery, wandering reason, delirious imagination, and the wasted tenderness of a loving, broken heart; and it was tinted with the most graphic colors of romance. The art-method by which it was projected was peculiar in this, — that it disregarded probability, and addressed itself to the imaginative perception. When *Meg Merrilies* sprang forth in the moonlight, and stood, with towering figure and extended arms, tense, rigid, and terribly beautiful, glaring on the form of *Harry Bertram*, the spectator saw a creature of the ideal world and not of earth. This conception may have been in the brain of Sir Walter Scott; it was never on his page. Miss Cushman could give free rein to her frenzy in this character, and that was why she loved it and excelled in it, and was able by means of it to reveal herself so amply and distinctly to the public mind. What she thus revealed was a power of passionate emotion as swift as the lightning and as wild as the gale, — an individuality

fraught with pathos, romance, tenderness, grandeur, the deep knowledge of grief, and the royal strength of endurance. Her *Meg Merrilies* was not her greatest work, but it was her most startling and effective one, because it was the most sudden and brilliant illumination of her being."

Henry Morley, the English author, and editor of the *London Examiner*, wrote: —

"Miss Cushman's melodramatic *Meg Merrilies* has quite as indisputably the attributes of genius about it as any piece of poetry or tragedy could have. Such is her power over the intention and feeling of the part that the mere words of it become a secondary matter. It is the figure, the gait, the look, the tone, by which she puts beauty and passion into language the most indifferent. When these mere artifices are continued through a series of scenes, a certain strain becomes apparent, and the effect is not wholly agreeable. Nevertheless it is something to see what the unassisted resources of acting may achieve with the mere idea of a fine part, stripped of fine language, unclothed, as it were, in words. The human tenderness blending with that Eastern picturesqueness of gesture, the fine sentiment breaking out from beneath that heavy feebleness and clumsiness of old age, are wonderfully startling."

From Mr. H. D. Stone's "Personal Recollections of the Drama" we quote: —

"But the *Meg Merrilies* of Miss Cushman is the most positively electrical and *fearfully* grand of all her inimitable personations. Miss Cushman has made *Meg Merrilies* a specialty, — in fact, wholly, exclusively her

own, and has no rival in it on either the American or British boards. Those who have once witnessed her in the 'Old Witch' will have little desire to see any other person, however eminent that person may be, in that peculiar *rôle*. It would seem as though, when he wrote 'Guy Mannering,' Sir Walter Scott must have had Charlotte Cushman in his mind's eye as the proper representative of old *Meg*."

From Laurence Hutton's "Plays and Players:" —

"As *Nancy Sikes* she made her first great hit; as *Meg Merrilies*, perhaps, she has appeared to greatest advantage, and in this part will she be most fondly remembered."

Miss Jewsbury, the novelist, who was a friend of Miss Cushman, thus speaks of one of her visits to Manchester, and of her acting of *Meg Merrilies:* —

"In Manchester she made many friends, quiet, domestic people, who regarded her with affection and respect. She was noble and generous, and gave help to whoever needed it to the utmost of her ability. As she said once of herself, 'she tried always to keep her prow turned towards good,' and I feel sure that this desire underlay the whole of her life.

". . . Of her acting in some of her characters I retain a vivid recollection. Her *Meg Merrilies*, and that strange, silent spring to the middle of the stage, which was her entrance on it, can never be forgotten; nor the tones of her voice, which seemed to come from another world. Madame Vestris said that '*Meg Merrilies* made her turn cold.' The song she crooned in the part was exactly as *Meg* would have given it, and sug-

gested no other person and no acting. Indeed, all her characters were singularly true and individual. She never seemed to display herself in her acting."

The costume which Miss Cushman wore in *Meg Merrilies*, and her whole make-up, was as much her own as her rendering of the character. It seemed to be an unmeaning and incongruous collection of strange parts, never intended to form a whole; but when, by the fitly joining together which Miss Cushman effected (by some means unknown to any one but herself), it appeared in its entirety, it was full of subtle meaning. It told of all the old gypsy had endured, — the wind and storm, the cold and hardship; all were symbolized in that remarkable dress with its dilapidated head-gear. And yet, poor as it was, there was something in that head-dress, or in the way it was worn, that suggested a supernatural force, a genuine, untamed queenliness.

The stick used by Miss Cushman was not "a goodly sloe-thorn cudgel," but a "property," and provided for each engagement when required; there was therefore an opportunity afforded for the gratification of curiosity-collectors. Frequently Miss Cushman was asked to give the stick she had used to some admirer, and it would not be strange if many of those relics still hold a place of honor in various collections throughout the land. The one she last carried in New York is at Villa Cushman, her late home at Newport.

On Dec. 24, 1849, Miss Cushman again appeared at the Broadway Theatre, New York, as *Julia*, in the "Hunchback." On Jan. 5, 1850, she acted *Bianca*, in "Fazio," the character in which she had made her

début in London, and it was as enthusiastically received in New York as in the former city. Her personation of frenzied jealousy was remarkable for its power, while her touching and subdued misery, as well as her self-accusation at the end of the Trial scene, were equally worthy of admiration. In the scene where *Fazio* is led away she touched the very topmost limit of her power. When the fatal bell first sounded she stood rigid, fixed in form and gaze, unconsciously peering into vacancy. Even when *Fazio* spoke tenderly to her she was not roused. The bell tolled again and again; she heard it not, and he was led away. At last the sound reached her ear; for one swift moment she looked around, and in that flash of thought understood all that had happened; and before another moment could add its misery she fell like some helpless creature o'ertaken by the lightning-shaft. Her fall was indescribable; it told fully of the utter wreck and ruin of her all. Her exit was another miracle of acting; no one can say how she moved. She did not walk, nor creep, nor drag herself along; she seemed to go without motive-power; and as she passed from sight the spectator felt as though an invisible hand had drawn her out into a gulf of deep despair.

During the winter of 1850 she made a long and successful Southern tour, and acted at New Orleans, Savannah, Charleston, Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, — everywhere to crowded houses, which were enthusiastic in their appreciation of her powers.

This year (1850) was a very busy one. On May 13 she acted *Romeo* at the Astor Place Opera House,

New York, with Miss Fanny Wallack as *Juliet*, and Mr. Couldock as *Mercutio*. In writing of her assumption of male characters, Mr. Hutton, in "Plays and Players," says: —

"*Romeo, Claude Melnotte, Cardinal Wolsey*, and *Hamlet* are among the most prominent of the male parts she has played. Her *Cardinal Wolsey*, in which she did not appear until 1858, was a most remarkable performance. She is no doubt the only woman who has had the courage and the ability to undertake it. Another marvellous assumption of hers was *Romeo*. She was earnest, intense, and natural. The constitutional susceptibility of *Romeo's* character was depicted by her in its boldest relief, — a particular phase of the nature of the young Montague, which no male actor, unless he were a mere youth, could efficiently and satisfactorily portray.

"In the 'Lady of Lyons' she has played the *Widow Melnotte* (she was the original *Widow Melnotte* in New York), *Pauline*, and *Claude*. She acquired high repute for her *Claude* in England, and drew crowded houses at the Old Broadway, in 1850, where she first assumed it. The public seemed greatly to relish the earnest and truthful manner in which she rendered the familiar and celebrated character. It was said, over twenty-five years ago, that while women ordinarily fail when they assume male parts, Miss Cushman always succeeds."

The following anecdote illustrates Miss Cushman's decision and nerve. At the National Theatre, Boston, during the season of 1851-52, as she was playing *Romeo* to the *Juliet* of Miss Anderton, in the midst of

one of the most romantic passages between the lovers, some person in the house sneezed in such a manner as to attract the attention of the whole audience, and every one knew that the sneeze was artificial and derisive. Miss Cushman instantly stopped the dialogue, and led Miss Anderton off the stage, as a cavalier might lead a lady from the place where an insult had been offered her. She then returned to the footlights and said in a clear, firm voice, "Some man must put that person out, or I shall be obliged to do it myself." The fellow was taken away; the audience rose *en masse* and gave three cheers for Miss Cushman, who recalled her companion and proceeded with the play as if nothing had happened.

On the 10th of June she acted *Meg Merrilies* at Niblo's Garden, New York, and then took six weeks from her engagements to go to England to see a friend who was seriously ill. On the morning of August 30 she arrived again in New York, and the same evening appeared at Niblo's as *Meg Merrilies*, closing the season the following night as *Mrs. Haller*. In October she filled another engagement at the Broadway Theatre, ending on the 26th. After an arduous winter and spring, during which she acted in several cities, she took a benefit at the Broadway Theatre in June, 1851, and on that occasion acted *Queen Katherine* and *Lady Gay Spanker*.

I give here an anecdote which was related to me by one of the actors who saw the occurrence: —

At a rehearsal for "Guy Mannering" one morning Miss Cushman was much disturbed by the singers in a concerted piece failing in the time. She appealed to

the leader of the orchestra, who was playing a violin, and asked that he should use his *bâton*. Again the piece was rehearsed and again failed; a second time she insisted that Mr. —— should relinquish his violin and beat the time clear through; a third time the singing went on and with little improvement. Just as it was ended Miss Cushman saw that the leader was again busy with his bow. Then she walked down to the footlights, reached over and took the offending violin and bow into her own possession, and marched up and down the stage using it herself. The piece was rehearsed again; the *bâton* was kept to its work, and so was the fiddle in Miss Cushman's hands, though we cannot say that she played a tune; and this time all went well.

In the spring of 1852 Miss Cushman announced her determination to retire from the stage. She took leave of the Boston public in March, and appeared for her last engagement, at the Broadway in New York, in May, acting *Meg Merrilies* on her last night.

The frequent repetition of Miss Cushman's farewells to the stage has been the occasion of much humorous remark and some censure. Mr. Winter spoke of this as follows, at the time of her death: —

"It is not difficult to understand (when we consider that Miss Cushman was a woman of weird genius, sombre imagination, great sensibility, and celibate condition; that she had been victorious by force rather than by sweetness; that for her conscientious mind and highly nervous organization the practice of the dramatic art was terribly earnest, and that frequently she was the victim of disease) in what way she often came

to believe that the limit of her labor was reached, that the end of her life was near, and that her retirement from the public view was needful. With natures that see widely and feel deeply, such despondent views of personal destiny and worldly affairs are not unusual. Thackeray, long before he wrote 'The Newcomes,' said of himself that his work was done and he would accomplish no more. In the several farewells that she took of the stage Miss Cushman acted like a woman, and precisely like the woman that she was; and the censors who have misjudged her upon this point have done so, we think, through failing to consider the probable effect on conduct of that element of feminine weakness — that unsatisfied and therefore forlorn tenderness of woman's heart — which was the core of her rugged and stalwart nature. All of her adieus were sincere. None of them until now was final or possible. Let us bring to the coffin of this great genius, dead and at rest after such trials and such anguish, not only the gentleness of charitable judgment, but the justice of intelligent appreciation."

This seems fully and justly to account for what, under other circumstances and in another person, would furnish ground for severity of judgment.

CHAPTER VII.

1852–1860.

MISS CUSHMAN passed the summer and early autumn of 1852 at Liverpool with Mrs. Muspratt, made a visit to the Isle of Wight, and in October went to Rome with a party of friends, including Miss Harriet Hosmer and Mrs. Lippincott ("Grace Greenwood"). She had an agreeable winter, and in the spring, after visiting Naples, Leghorn, and Florence, returned by way of the Italian lakes, Switzerland, and Paris, to England. She then passed some time at Great Malvern, to which place she often went for rest and to profit by the water-treatment.

In December, 1853, she again acted in Liverpool, and during the next three months, in London. It was in March, 1854, that Chorley's "Duchess Elinor" was brought out at the Haymarket Theatre. Mr. Vandenhoff, who was then acting there, had a part in the play. He says, in his "Note-Book," that it had great literary merit, and that Miss Cushman thought her part in it a fine one, and had counted on it for a new success. The piece was *endured* the first night; but on the second a volley of hisses, in the fifth act, ended the matter, and consigned it to oblivion.

In April she appeared again in Liverpool, and in May in London, Birmingham, and Sheffield. In June she went to Paris, but was recalled to England on account of the illness and death of her little niece, Ida Muspratt.

The summer was passed in her usual manner when in Great Britain, and in September she was again upon the stage, opening her season in Dublin, and appearing in many provincial cities. In December of this year I find the first mention of Miss Cushman as a reader. It was upon the occasion of her dining with the Duke of Devonshire at Brighton, when she read "Henry VIII." to the Duke and his guests.

In January, 1855, Miss Cushman established herself in a house in London, where she received many friends, and assumed that social position which her character and genius had won for her and entitled her to hold.

Miss Cushman had a quick and ready sympathy with whatever was going on around her. This attribute fitted her to be a friend to people of all ages and positions. She was passionately fond of children, and very rich in the power to amuse and entertain them. She called herself the "big mamma" of the children of her own family, and never considered anything that it was in her power to do for them as a waste of time or trouble, — no, nor even a task, if only they were happy. She was always keenly interested in those about to begin the real work of life, and the sympathy and kindliness which she manifested towards young people placed them at ease with her. She drew them out, and had the tact to make them say the best that was in them; and she was much in the

habit of generously aiding them to make a beginning in study and preparation for their chosen path in life.

With people of her own age she was always welcome and greatly beloved. There was no *apparent* self-assertion about her, and yet by some subtle quality — seemingly a part of herself and not a cultivated characteristic — she exercised a sort of spell upon a number of individuals as easily as upon one, and in whatever company she found herself she was emphatically *the person* present. This may have arisen in part from the peculiarity of her manner, which was certainly always more or less dramatic, and at times purely tragic. It was especially noticeable when she met a friend; she seemed to make a sort of stage entrance; then, as she was interested in the conversation, she became more simple and natural, and in all cases, when she wished to please, she succeeded perfectly.

Her power to attract the admiration and to gain the affection of women was remarkable. One lady has told me of the wonderful impression which Miss Cushman produced upon her at their first meeting. She said: "Dearly as I loved my mother and my home, if Miss Cushman had asked me that day to go with her and be her slave, without even going back to say farewell to my friends, I should have consented. I would have given my life for her; and though I did not realize it, I was in such a state of excitement that, after leaving her, I burst into tears the moment another person addressed me, and, so to speak, broke the spell under which she had laid me." The lady added that it was not until years had passed, and she had known Miss Cushman

very well, and life had brought many other associations and cares to her, that she could resist this peculiar influence whenever she met the great actress.

In this connection I quote from an article which appeared in the *Boston Advertiser* shortly after Miss Cushman's death: —

"Miss Cushman possessed in a remarkable degree the power of attaching women to her. They loved her with utter devotion, and she repaid their love with the wealth of her great warm heart. Young girls gave her genuine hero-worship, which she received with a gracious kindness, that neither encouraged the worship nor wounded the worshipper; mature women loved and trusted her to the last hour of her life. She had the perfect service of the purest friendship; and beyond that, numbers of noble women waiting to give and receive unfailing sympathy and affection. Miss Cushman's triumphs have been great, but the greatest of these was the character that won such friends."

She had also that capacity, so valuable in a hostess, of perceiving all that was occurring, and keeping herself *au courant* with several things at the same moment. I may illustrate this by saying that upon one occasion, when she was holding an important conversation with a gentleman who related the circumstance to me, a little girl, who was a great favorite with her, was playing a game at a table in the room with another child. Miss Cushman was interested to have her pet win; and while she gave intelligent and thoughtful attention to the conversation, she at the same time followed the game so closely as to advise and caution the child

from time to time, and guide her skilfully through it; and yet the gentleman never felt for a moment that she was diverted from the matter of which they spoke. It is easy to understand how such a capacity must have aided her in accomplishing the vast amount of varied work which she did.

There was a sense of repose about her, in the discussion of important matters, which was most agreeable to others. The gentleman above spoken of said: "To me she was the most reposeful woman that I ever knew. When one had conversed with her he felt that everything had been said; not only that she, but that the person with whom she talked, had said all that belonged to the subject and the occasion." Considering such traits, it is easy to comprehend the devotion she received from her intimate associates, and the admiration she commanded in all who knew her.

Her personal appearance and want of beauty has been frequently commented on, but when once in her presence this was forgotten. Certainly she lacked beauty of feature, and what is commonly termed gracefulness; but her presence was at once genial and stately, and one soon forgot the form, and thought only of the expression of her face, which was ever changing, and depended much upon the effect of her eyes, which were remarkably fine.

Many pictures have been made of Miss Cushman. At one time, in London, five different artists were painting portraits of her; but no likeness could ever represent her satisfactorily, since it was the flexibility of her features, and the picturing of every passing emotion

upon them, that made the face by which her friends and the public knew her. Thus it has resulted that portraits of her appear to be either sweet and weak or strong and hard, exaggerating always one or the other of her two most prominent characteristics, — tenderness and strength.

To return to her life in London. She gave musical parties there which were very enjoyable; and, on one occasion, when she entertained Ristori at dinner, paid her a very pretty compliment by having the whole affair as nearly like a dinner in Italy as possible, and wearing the Italian colors, red, green, and white, in her own dress.

With all her private interests she continued her professional labors. In February, 1855, she again appeared in the provinces, and during that winter and spring she did an immense amount of work, ending her season in July. During the summer she visited the English lakes, and on October 1 acted at Newcastle, later at Sunderland, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and so on, returning to London for a month at the Haymarket, and then going again to Sheffield, Wolverhampton, and Bristol.

How few who look on the results of such a life appreciate all the labor that is required to produce them. At times Miss Cushman broke down and suffered in health and spirits. Her friends became anxious about her, and from such expressions as the following, quoted from one of Miss Jewsbury's letters, we can understand exactly what the reaction must have been when she had overtaxed even her great powers of endurance: —

"My dearest Child, — You are in a bad way just now, and no wonder; you have had enough to drive to distraction a whole regiment of *men*, let alone women. But don't distress yourself too much in your own heart; your depression and discouragement, your weariness and vexation of spirit, are in a great measure the result of all the superhuman exertions you have had to go through for the last few months. Living in London society does, under any circumstances, make one exquisitely sad, and you have had its essence, doubly and trebly distilled and powerful. . . . The life you have led, the success, the acclamations, the perfect glare of triumph in which you have moved for the last few months, are almost fabulous. No nervous system that was ever born of woman could stand it; you are a perfect miracle in my eyes, but you are proving your mortality by suffering."

In January, 1856, she began another arduous year, so much like the preceding that no account need be given of it until the autumn, when she went again to Rome; and, though always busy, she did not act for some months.

In September, 1857, she came to America, where she made her reappearance at Burton's New Theatre, New York, on the 28th of that month, as *Bianca*. During October she commenced a second engagement at this house, and on the 13th of November she acted *Cardinal Wolsey;* she gave a masterly impersonation of the character, and added new laurels to the many she had won before.

She remained in her own country about nine months,

acting in many cities, and again took leave of the public at Niblo's Garden, New York, in an engagement commencing with "Henry VIII.," on June 21, 1858. She was supported by E. L. Davenport, John Gilbert, L. R. Shewell, Mrs. Abbott, Miss Ida Vernon, etc. During this engagement she acted *Romeo* to the *Juliet* of Miss Mary Devlin, who then made her New York début.* Miss Cushman and Miss Devlin also appeared as *Lady Gay Spanker* and *Grace*, in "London Assurance," with Henry Placide, Brougham, and Blake as *Sir Harcourt Courtly*, *Dazzle*, and *Meddle*.

Night after night the bills announced the final appearance of Miss Cushman, and still she stayed on. This was daily repeated from the 2d to the 7th of July, when she played *Lady Macbeth* and sailed almost immediately thereafter.

What has been said of Miss Cushman's manner in private was true of her upon the stage; that is, that at first, before she lost herself in her assumed character, and indeed always in the minor scenes, she was what is termed "stagy." She employed the angular motion, the stride, the start, the labored breathing, and the stilted declamation which are happily almost obsolete now. This manner was especially noticeable in "Macbeth," and in the first scene with *Macbeth* Miss Cushman gave full illustration of these peculiarities; but as the play progressed, and she became in truth *Lady Macbeth*, all this staginess disappeared, and she seemed to have forgotten herself; she was acting no longer.

* This lady was married to Mr. Edwin Booth in July, 1860, and died in February, 1863.

She coaxed and chided by turns; was now the queen, again the loving wife, and then the suffering, conscience-stricken woman, with all the naturalness possible. Of course there are differences of opinion upon Miss Cushman's playing, as upon everything else in the world, and I shall give both sides of the question here. Mr. Murdock says in "The Stage:"—

"Miss Cushman's style of acting, while it lacked imagination, possessed in a remarkable degree the elements of force. She grasped the intellectual body of the poet's conception without mastering its more subtle spirit; she caught the facts of a character, but its conceits were beyond her reach. Her understanding was never at fault; it was keen and penetrating, but that glow of feeling which springs from the centre of emotional elements was not a prominent constituent of her organization. She was intensely prosaic, definitely practical; and hence her perfect identity with what may be termed the materialism of *Lady Macbeth*, and the still more fierce personality of that dramatic nondescript, *Meg Merrilies*, neither of which characters was of 'imagination all compact,' but rather of imperious wilfulness."

Mr. Vandenhoff writes in his "Note Book:"—

"I never admired her *Lady Macbeth*. It is too animal; it wants intellectual confidence and relies too much on physical energy. Besides, she bullies *Macbeth*, gets him into a corner of a stage, and — as I heard a man with more force than elegance express it — she 'pitches into him.' In fact, as one sees her large, clenched hand and muscular arm threatening him, in

alarming proximity, one feels that if other arguments fail with her husband, she will have recourse to blows."

We have seen how, in this very character, she interested Macready the first night that she played with him; also how, on the occasion of his farewell, when he acted before the Queen, he chose Miss Cushman to support him. All this is the highest praise he could have given her.

John D. Stockton in *Scribner's Monthly Magazine* for June, 1876, says: —

"As a tragic actress Charlotte Cushman held an unsurpassed position. Of her greatness in her own art there is no question. Shakespeare in our day has had no grander exponent than she. . . . She frequently rose to the level of the Shakespearian mind, was kindled with the Shakespearian fire, so that in her inspired moments she realized the character. It was not always thus, for the greatest of actors can only effect by supreme effort that which Shakespeare did with apparently unconscious ease. But it is enough glory for an actress when she can cause her auditors to forget, even if only for a moment, the difference between the *Lady Macbeth* of the stage and the *Lady Macbeth* of the book; that she, too, has something of the magic which deludes men to delight, and is able to re-create with no unworthy hand creations which are unrivalled in imagination. . . . All the elements of Miss Cushman's artistic nature were large, and were cast in heroic mould. The grand characteristic of her genius seemed to be the rare union and perfect balance of her passion and intellect. The deep emotional powers are frequently lost upon the

stage, because of the want of adequate intellectual direction; but the tremendous strength of Charlotte Cushman was controlled by the laws of intellectual beauty and truth. Even in the terrific outbursts of *Meg Merrilies*, the agonized madness of *Bianca*, or the remorse of *Lady Macbeth*, she never ranted nor overstepped the modesty of nature. Passion is like fire, a good servant but a dangerous master, and with her it was kept within the bounds of the purest art. This gave to her acting the charm of reserved power; it did not convey the impression of labor and effort, but one of natural inspiration and ease."

One more quotation from Mr. H. A. Clapp in the *Boston Advertiser*, May, 1875, when she last appeared as *Lady Macbeth*: —

"Miss Cushman at once compels the closest attention and the strongest interest of the spectator; and long before the tragedy is concluded she has accomplished the wonderful feat of gaining for herself the warmest sympathy. In the scenes of the first and second acts, in which *Lady Macbeth* figures, no one with a mind any less excessively subtle than Mr. Weiss's could discover, we think, that love and not ambition is the main motive of the woman's character; but further on, when the dread judgment of crime has overtaken the royal criminals, Miss Cushman represents the womanly nature of *Lady Macbeth* as succumbing in anguish before her own conscience, while her whole heart is turned in tender compassion to the suffering of her husband.

"During the Banquet scene *Lady Macbeth* is shown as regal in dignity, and shrewd, self-possessed, and ready

in explaining the *King's* emotion, trying to chide him into courage, and dismissing the company of dangerous witnesses; but upon the departure of the guests she has only broken words expressive of the deepest affection for her husband, and at the close of the interview, by groans and gestures and looks, she shows how all her *inward* courage has disappeared, — that she can yet encounter the world, but hides her face from God, and conscience, His avenger.

"Miss Cushman now carried out this idea — which, of course, is not new — with absolute boldness and sharpness; it is consistent with the rest of her conception, is highly effective in itself, and correctly represents one justifiable view of Shakespeare's purpose. To such a nature the Sleep-walking scene comes with the effect of a dramatic climax, but inevitably. *Lady Macbeth's* soul *must* confess the horror of its remorse; she would die a hundred several deaths before making a sign to the world; but in sleep her will is powerless, and her dread Judge sentences her to be forever re-enacting her crime. Miss Cushman's whole interpretation deserves the careful study, as it will compel the admiration, of all persons of judgment and culture."

A fact of great interest in connection with this personation has been told me by Mr. Lawrence Barrett. It is that Miss Cushman maintained that, all through the more important scenes of the play, both *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth* were under the influence of wine. She supported her opinion from the text, and believed that Shakespeare supposed it to be apparent that they were drunk. This suits well with the manner which Miss

Cushman had at some points in the play, a reckless, swinging way of doing everything and an apparent carelessness of what happened. When the play is read with this theory in mind, it is easy to find many things that suit it well.

Miss Cushman passed a portion of the summer of 1858 at Malvern, went to various points of interest in Great Britain, and in October turned her face towards Rome, visiting many other places *en route*. Arrived at Rome she occupied herself in fitting up her home in Via Gregoriana, known to so many of her countrymen and women. It was most advantageously placed, and there she lived what, to a person of her age and tastes, must have been as nearly an ideal life as is often enjoyed in this world. Her fame was world-wide; her superiority in the profession she had chosen was fully acknowledged; all doors were open to her; indeed, people of rank, in literature and art as well as by birth, sought her acquaintance, and she was able to do many kindnesses for others, a privilege she always craved and improved.

This first winter in the Roman home was followed by a sad springtime, for in April news came to her of Mrs. Muspratt's illness. She hastened to Liverpool and arrived before the death of her sister, which occurred on the 10th of May, 1859. When we consider what the tie had been between these two sisters, and how Miss Cushman had been to her sister a support and friend, almost a second mother, we can easily understand the void she must have found in her life when that sister was taken out of it.

After spending the summer in Wales she returned to Rome. The winter of 1859–60 was a quiet one. It was then that her friend, Miss Stebbins, made a portrait bust of her. The original belongs to the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston; several copies exist in different places in America, and one is at Seaforth Hall, Liverpool.

CHAPTER VIII.

1860–1870.

On the 9th of June, 1860, Miss Cushman again sailed for America, and in the following autumn devoted herself to her profession. She commenced an engagement of forty-eight nights at Winter Garden, New York, October 1. The first night she appeared as *Mrs. Haller*, with John Dyott as *The Stranger*. During the engagement she acted *Bianca*, with Ada Clifton as *Aldabella* and Dyott as *Fazio; Meg Merrilies*, with Mrs. Chanfrau as *Lucy*, Couldock as *Dandie*, and Davidge as *Dominie Sampson; Romeo* to the *Juliet* of Mrs. D. P. Bowers; and *Cardinal Wolsey* in "Henry VIII.," with Mrs. Duffield as *Queen Katherine*. It was a very brilliant season, and in February and March, 1861, she fulfilled another engagement at the same theatre. She then acted *Nancy Sikes* for the first time in New York for many years, with the following strong cast: Mrs. George Stoddart as *Oliver*, J. W. Wallack, Jr., as *Fagin*, J. B. Studley as *Bill Sikes*, Davidge as *Bumble*, and Owen Marlowe as *Fang*. Later she appeared as *Katherine* to Wallack's *Petruchio*.

On the 21st of March she acted at the Academy of Music, New York, for the benefit of the American

Dramatic Fund. It is said that the cast of "Macbeth" on that evening was the strongest which had been known in that tragedy in a generation. It was as follows: —

Macbeth		Edwin Booth.
Duncan		C. Kemble Mason.
Malcolm		O. B. Collins.
Banquo		A. W. Fenno.
Macduff	Noblemen of Scotland	Charles Fisher.
Lenox		T. Weymiss.
Rosse		T. Hamblin, Jr.
Bleeding Officer		Felix Rogers.
First Murderer		J. C. Williamson.
Lady Macbeth		Miss Cushman.
Principal Singing Witch		Mme. Anna Bishop.
First Witch		Harry Pearson.
Second Witch		John Sefton.
Third Witch		James Lingard.

The whole occasion was a memorable one, and the receipts, thirty-one hundred dollars, were one third larger than those of previous benefits.

A wedding in Miss Cushman's family took her to St. Louis at this time, and she was greatly interested in what she heard there, and in other Southwestern cities, concerning the war, just then beginning. She made her final appearance that season at New Haven, and sailed for England in July.

After hearing of the first battle of Bull Run, she thus writes on August 8: —

"The news brought by the last steamer has made me so sad and so heart-sick that I hardly know how to talk or write about it, further than this, that I believe

in God's goodness, and that even this must work together for good. . . . But I am sorry not to be at home to see the matter through. God help the weak and prosper the right, and send the wrong-doer the punishment he deserves. I do think the South comes rightfully by this success, on the principle that the Devil helps his own at first. Let those laugh who win. It was natural that all this playing at soldiers should result in a shameful defeat; but we shall see what will be the end."

After a summer in her usual resorts, she left early in the autumn for Rome; and there is nothing of unusual interest in her life until June, 1863, when she came again to America, principally for the purpose of acting for the benefit of the Sanitary Commission. For this charity she appeared in Philadelphia, September 12; in Boston, September 16; in Baltimore, October 19; and in New York, October 22, — realizing for the fund a total sum of eight thousand two hundred and sixty-seven dollars.

Dr. Henry W. Bellows, President of the United States Sanitary Commission, thus wrote, in a card which he published after Miss Cushman had sailed for Europe: —

"This magnificent product of the genius of Miss Cushman, devoted to the relief of our suffering soldiers, is only the most striking exemplification yet made of woman's power and will to do her full part in the national struggle. . . . It is due to Miss Charlotte Cushman to say that this extraordinary gift of money, so magically evoked by her spell, is but the least part

of the service which, ever since the war began, she has been rendering our cause in Europe. Her earnest faith in the darkest hours, her prophetic confidence in our success, her eloquent patriotism in all presences, have been potent influences abroad, and deserve and command the gratitude of the whole nation."

It was during the same visit that Miss Cushman read the Ode on the occasion of the dedication of the Great Organ in the Boston Music Hall.

In the course of the following winter a splendid album, containing pictures in oil and water colors, painted by artists of the cities in which Miss Cushman had acted for the great cause of the day, was forwarded to her in Rome, as an expression of the appreciation of her efforts for the aid of our soldiers.

She resumed her usual mode of life in Europe, going between Rome and England, and there are signs that her health was already affected by the insidious disease which she had inherited; but she kept up her interest in everything, especially in what was occurring here. On March 4, 1865, she wrote: "What a day this is at home! How grand Mr. Lincoln must feel that, by the sheer force of honesty, integrity, and patience, he has overcome faction to such an extent that he is to-day, by the *convictions* of the whole people, placed again in the presidential chair to guide and protect their interests for four more years. The first election of a President may have come through popular clamor, through the passions and excitements of the moment being successfully played upon by popular orators; but the calm reindorsement of faith in his

judgment, reason, calmness, prudence, and goodness, after such a four years, is a spectacle sublime in the eyes of men and angels, at a juncture like the present, when the world looks on in curious wonder and doubt and distrust at the struggle upon which depend republican institutions for all future time. God help him to keep true and faithful!"

During the next month, when the news came of Mr. Lincoln's death and the attack upon Mr. Seward, the anxiety and unhappiness of Americans in Rome was very great; and when it is remembered that Mr. Seward and Miss Cushman were warm friends, her personal sorrow will be appreciated. Her letters to Miss Seward, and after her death to Mr. Seward, are very interesting. In one of these she speaks of her own health as having prevented her from coming to America the previous summer; and yet, with deep personal sorrow in her heart, and physical suffering in addition, there were those about her who drew all their strength from her hope and courage. She was indeed, then, the *cross-bearer;* and so great was the effect she produced upon the Americans in Rome that some of them have since declared that they even walked the streets in the hope of meeting her and hearing her strong, cheerful words.

Meantime political excitements had arisen in Italy, prior to the Austrian war; and in May, 1866, when troops were being moved and all sorts of hindrances existed in the way of travelling, Miss Cushman was summoned to London by the illness of her mother. She made all possible haste, but news of Mrs. Cush-

man's death met her in Paris. This grief affected her seriously in health and spirits.

In the autumn she returned to Rome, and during that winter (1867) was very much interested in a Danish sculptor, Wilhelm Mathieu, who was old and poor. Several years before he had made for a Russian Grand Duchess three busts of musical composers, — Palestrina, Mozart, and Beethoven; and Miss Cushman proposed that if the plaster casts of these works, which she presented to the Boston Music Hall, should be admired sufficiently, a fund should be raised to put them into marble, for which purpose she would give a benefit performance. In the *Atlantic Monthly* for April, 1868, there appeared a long article relative to these busts, written by Mr. John Sullivan Dwight. Miss Cushman's plan did not meet with the desired response, and nothing more was ever done about the matter.

In the autumn of 1867 Miss Cushman was on the coast of Cornwall, and in one of her letters spoke of the likeness of Bude to Newport, and said, "I am so much better and stronger for this wild, unceremonious life among the rocks and deep-sea caves." But her condition gradually became more and more alarming, until in the spring of 1869 she consulted Dr. J. Marion Sims, in Paris. Her disease was cancer of the breast, and Dr. Sims earnestly advised her "to do nothing, to live well, take care of her general health, amuse herself, and forget her trouble if possible." Miss Stebbins, in her biography of Miss Cushman, expresses regret that this course was not followed; but Miss Cushman was restless under the feeling that possibly some

quick relief existed, and finally, after consulting Sir James Paget, she went to Edinburgh, where Sir James Simpson performed an operation for her relief. An account of the remarkable manner in which she met this trial appeared in the *New York Evening Post* after her death. A portion of this article is here given. The writer, who signs with the initials J. C., after telling of the first meeting with Miss Cushman at Malvern, says: —

"Miss Cushman was in excellent spirits and apparently in full health, not one of us supposing for a moment the cause of her leaving Italy. . . . As we left the house at a late hour she said: 'So you are going to Edinburgh! Well, I shall see you there shortly; and will you kindly look up some lodgings for Miss Stebbins and myself?' Soon after our arrival the ladies followed. . . . Almost every evening for a week we visited them, — always agreeably entertained by the lively manners of Miss Cushman, although we could but notice an increasing shade of melancholy on the face of her faithful companion.

"At last she said one day as we parted: 'Don't come here to-morrow; I do not think I shall be very well for a day or two.' On the next day, after dinner at Sir James Simpson's, a remark having been casually made by some one that Miss Cushman was complaining of a slight illness, Sir James cried: 'Slight illness! Do you know that I operated on her for cancer this morning?' . . . It was a terrible operation, occupying fifty-six minutes in its performance, and borne by the sufferer with the most heroic fortitude.

"After a fortnight had passed, and the dangerous symptoms which supervened had disappeared, Miss Cushman sent a message that she was ready to see us again. I shall never forget the impression she then made upon us as she sat pillowed up in her easy-chair, — the placid repose of her pale face, in which every masculine trait had softened down and melted into the tenderness of her sex.

"'I have not been very well, lately,' she said, 'but I am glad to see you again;' nor did she then or afterward allude to her complaint. Day by day we watched her steady improvement until she was herself again, declaiming as she talked, and electrifying us with her eloquence of word and thought. . . . Had the operation been completely successful she would doubtless have continued in private life.

"But to her knowledge that she labored under an incurable malady the public is indebted for her latest and most wonderful displays of histrionic talent, to which she devoted her powers for the sole purpose of driving her thought away from herself. The world has not known what prompted Charlotte Cushman, in her later years, to reappear upon the stage, — how small was her ambition for applause, and how little she regarded pecuniary gain."

The operation took place on the 26th of August, 1869, and very serious complications followed; her life seemed to hang in the balance, but a good constitution and an iron will prevailed, and she rallied. For a short time it was hoped that the disease was baffled. In November she went again to Rome. She never

fully regained her strength, however, after the great nervous shock of the operation, and in the course of the winter she knew but too well that all she had endured had availed nothing.

In the spring of 1870 she again sought the advice of Sir James Paget, who had before approved of Sir James Simpson's course. This year Miss Cushman urged him to consent to the treatment of excision by caustic. At last he consented, and during the month of June she submitted to this exquisitely painful process with her accustomed courage. Again hopes of a cure were indulged for a brief space; she went to Malvern to "build up;" but very soon the unfavorable symptoms reappeared, and she resolved to revisit America.

CHAPTER IX.

1870–1874.

In October, 1870, Miss Cushman sailed from England for the last time, and soon after her arrival in America she appeared as a reader of Shakespeare. It seems almost like a slight to Miss Cushman *to say* that her success was great, — at first thought that would appear to "go without saying;" but when we consider what a different matter it is to render *all* the parts of a play instead of one, the reading of Shakespeare assumes immense proportions. In this department Miss Cushman has been equalled only by Fanny Kemble, and excelled by none. Her great personal magnetism attracted her audiences and held them in sympathy with her; her directness, her subtle humor, her force of manner, and, above all, her imaginative weirdness, all combined to produce an effect as yet unrivalled by any one of the great army of "readers" who have followed her. Her most important readings were the plays of Shakespeare, but she by no means limited herself to these. She went "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," and her mingling of tenderness, delicacy, pathos, and humor, with her intensity in passionate parts, could nowhere find such scope as in the works of Shakespeare. But the usual sequence of the comedy is as

much relished after the tragedy in reading as in acting, and her renderings of "Betsey and I are Out," and "Miss Maloney on the Chinese Question," were always heartily relished, as they deserved to be. Her reading of dialect poems was simply exquisite, while purely lyrical selections, like the "Lady of Shalott," were no less justly given. When she read heroic pieces, such as "The Charge of the Light Brigade," "Hervé Riel," and "The Battle of Ivry," she poured out all the enthusiasm and spiritual force of her own nature, and inevitably wrought to the very highest pitch the same qualities in her audience.

During the winter of 1870 Miss Cushman went to Newport to try the air there, as it had been recommended to her for a winter residence. She soon determined to build "Villa Cushman," and with her accustomed celerity executed her plan.

It was in this year that she wrote thus sadly: —

"I am waiting; seeking all simple aids that can palliate my trouble; avoiding all things that can fatigue me; leading for the most part and for the first time in my life an *idle* existence, but I hope, with God's help, not a useless one for all that; for in trying to train myself to patience perhaps I am helping those who love me and suffer with me."

Her physicians advised her to work, for they saw that change, occupation, and constant diversion were necessary to her; and after such a life as hers had been the resources of a Newport winter would have been very tame to her, — not sufficient to banish her doubts and fears for a single hour; but while in pub-

lic, either in acting or reading, she was not ill or suffering, — not Charlotte Cushman, but for the time she was — any one whom she had elected to be.

On Sept. 25, 1871, she was at Booth's Theatre, appearing as *Queen Katherine*, *Lady Macbeth*, and *Meg Merrilies*. Her engagement lasted until November 4, and the enthusiasm and sympathy which the public then manifested for her bore full witness to the esteem in which her acting was held, and to the power she still exerted over her audiences. I shall here give some quoted opinions of Miss Cushman as *Queen Katherine*, which character is very generally considered her masterpiece. The first is from Mr. William Winter, in the *New York Tribune* : —

" In dealing with the conceptions of Shakespeare, Miss Cushman's spirit was the same, but her method was different. As *Meg Merrilies*, she obeyed the law of her own nature ; as *Queen Katherine*, she obeyed the law of the poetic ideal that encompassed her. In that stately, sweet, and pathetic character, and again, though to a less extent, in the terrible yet tender character of *Lady Macbeth*, both of which she apprehended through an intellect always clear and an imagination always adequate, the form and limitations prescribed by the dominant genius of the poet were scrupulously respected. She made Shakespeare real, but she never dragged him down to the level of the actual. She knew the heights of that wondrous intuition and potent magnetism, and she lifted herself and her hearers to their grand and beautiful eminence. Her best achievements in the illustration of Shakespeare were accordingly of the high-

est order of art. They were at once human and poetic. They were white marble suffused with fire. They thrilled the heart with emotion and passion, and they filled the imagination with a thoroughly satisfying sense of beauty, power, and completeness. They have made her illustrious. They have done much to assert the possible grandeur and beneficence of the stage, and to confirm it in the affectionate esteem of thoughtful men and women. They remain now as a rich legacy in the remembrance of this generation, and they will pass into history among the purest, highest, and most cherished works that genius has inspired and art has accomplished to adorn an age of culture and to elevate the human mind."

The following is from the pen of Mr. H. A. Clapp, and appeared in the *Boston Advertiser*, May 4, 1875, during her final engagement: —

"Simple with the simplicity of true art, powerfully and imaginatively conceived, and expressed with a rare commingling of queenly dignity and womanly pathos, this noble effort commends itself to every refined taste, to every cultivated mind, and to every sensitive heart. After the weak, unintellectual acting which has lately been inflicted upon us in serious and Shakespearian parts, . . . it is indeed a feast to witness Miss Cushman's finished and discriminating acting, and, above all, to listen to her pure and expressive delivery of the text, in which every one of the master dramatist's golden words is made to yield its treasure of thought, and yet in due relation and proportion to every other factor of the meaning.

"In Miss Cushman's present assumption we see little variation from her former performance, except that she now emphasizes the queenly and majestic side of the character a little more than before, and thus makes its pathetic aspect somewhat less conspicuous. A good illustration of this appears in Miss Cushman's delivery of her last lines in the Trial scene; the words, —

> 'I will not tarry; no, nor evermore,
> Upon this business, my appearance make
> In any of their courts,' —

which Miss Cushman used to give with a burst of anguish, as if the overfraught heart could bear its weight no longer, she now declaims with fiery, passionate intensity. Miss Cushman also dwells more than used to be her wont upon the physical horrors of her Sick scene, with a gain to its sensational effect, but with a slight loss, as we think, to the beauty and serenity which should be its most marked qualities. But the whole of this last scene is, as ever, most touching in its naturalness, and most noble in its moral grandeur and sweetness."

Miss Elizabeth Peabody thus wrote of the first time that she saw Miss Cushman in this character: —

"I need not say how I enjoyed her splendid impersonation throughout, but specially the Death scene. It was perfectly wonderful how she blended the infirmities of dying with the majesty of her spirit. But especially I was struck anew with the miraculous genius of Shakespeare, as evinced in that last speech to *Cromwell*, in which *Queen Katherine* characterized *Wolsey*

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in those sharp, heavily thought-freighted sentences, which it was obvious must be just so concise and terse because the fast-coming death so overcame her power to utter, that it was only by the intense will that she could utter at all, and so was forced to concentrate much in the few words of each sentence. Then, in the very death, she did not seem to struggle much, — did not evince physical pain, only torpor of organs. She went out of the body almost visibly, while the song of angels was sung behind the scenes."

The engagement at Booth's, spoken of above, was very successful; the receipts for forty-two nights were fifty-seven thousand dollars. I shall give one other extract, from a journal of the day, which refers to her in the part of *Queen Katherine:* —

"She acted with remarkable strength and fire. That she would bring back to the stage her old earnestness and subtlety, her unique command of all the resources of art, and her keen appreciation of the text, — enriching even the spaces between the lines with wonderful suggestiveness of look and gesture, — we quite expected; but last night she did more; she threw into her performance a vigor and intensity not inferior, as we remember them, to those characteristics in her best days. . . . If weakness exists it is more than atoned for by the splendor of her intelligence, her scholarly and refined elocution, the pathos, the simplicity, the effectiveness of her action. It is one thing to play a queen's part; it is another thing to look like a queen. . . . There was royalty in her demeanor, a consciousness of power in every movement, which made her the *one* figure of interest on the stage."

The following anecdote shows what a place her passion for the stage held in her very soul, and makes us wonder, with her, how she could live away from it. It was on the opening night of this first engagement at Booth's, when she played *Queen Katherine* and was greeted with the wildest enthusiasm by an immense audience. At the close of the first act she was called before the curtain and received tremendous applause; after this some one saw her in the wings quivering from head to foot with excitement, her eyes wells of flame. Just then the storm of applause burst out afresh for a second "call;" as Miss Cushman heard it she threw up her arms with a peculiar gesture, and cried out in a tone of indescribable, passionate, eager ecstasy: "Oh! how have I ever lived without this through all these years!"

She next filled an engagement in Boston, and while there wrote the following letter to a friend in England: —

"Your letter should have been acknowledged long ere this, but I have been the busiest and hardest-worked human being you *ever knew* for these last thirteen weeks. I do not remember even in my youngest days ever to have accomplished so much, for then I had only my profession, and no society duty to attend to as well. I have been hard at work bodily, mentally, socially, and not, I hope, worthlessly. If you have seen any of the New York papers from about the 26th September and 17th October to 29th of the same, you would have seen that my country-people give me credit for growth in grace, and *believe* now

firmly that they have a Siddons of their own! Of course it is not displeasing to me to be so considered, but *I know better!* I dare say I have grown intellectually, and my suffering has been sent to me in vain if I have not improved in spirit during all the time I have been away from my profession; but as a mere actress I was as good, if not better, eleven years ago than I am now. But what is printed lives for us, and what is conceived and acted lives only in the *memory* of the beholder; thus I am glad that such things should be *printed* of me. I do not think it has hurt me physically to work. While the recognition has done my soul and spirit good, I feel that I have not labored in vain.

"Then, after New York, when I went to my native city, Boston, where they never believed in me as much as they did elsewhere, I came to have such praise as made my *heart* satisfied, and they indorsed their good opinions in a substantial way, which was also good. The City Council paid me a great honor in formally announcing to the world that one of their chief boasts, their public school system, should be associated with my name, by enacting that henceforth and forever the school building, which had been erected on the site where stood the house in which I was born, was to be known as the *Cushman School.* This from old Puritan stock, which believes that the public school is the throne of the State, was a greater honor than any I could have received from them. I was proud, first, that I as an actress had won it; then, secondly, that for the first time this had been bestowed on a woman;

and then came the civic pride, in knowing that my towns-people should care that I ever was born. Nothing in all my life has so pleased me as this."

The scene when Miss Cushman visited the school was thus described: —

"Miss Cushman made a tour of the building, gracing each room with her presence. Then all were assembled in the hall for a dedicatory service. On the floor were seated the pupils, — a thousand girls; on the platform, teachers and visitors; and, in the centre, Miss Cushman. Here she made her 'maiden speech,' as she smilingly said. Those upturned girlish faces were all the inspiration she needed, and a flush of enthusiasm gathered on her pale face. For their encouragement she told them she walked those very streets a school-girl as poor as the poorest among them. With rapid gestures of her large, shapely hands, her eyes glowing with the fire of her own peculiar genius and her habitual intensity, she told them that whatever she had attained had been by giving *herself to her work*. A patience that tired not, an energy that faltered not, a persistence that knew no flagging, principles that swerved not, — and the victory was hers after long years of hard work. Higher than her intellectual strength, higher than her genius, her culture, or graces of character, she ranked her ability for *work*. This was the secret of her success, and the legacy she bequeathed the girls of the Cushman School. They knew something of her history, — that she had educated herself; that she had stoutly resisted the shafts of disease; that the great men of the age delighted to do her

honor; that she was an earnest, religious woman, upon whose fair name rested no cloud of suspicion. They felt the soft womanliness of her character shining out from the majesty of her strength, and who can say how many impulses 'To dare and do and be' were born there?"

Early in January, 1872, Miss Cushman started on an extended tour. She read and acted in many places, and did not reach her new home in Newport until June; and even after that she read at Narragansett and Newport for the benefit of local charities. She allowed herself but little rest, and in October began another season's work. She was acting in Boston in November, when the great fire interrupted her engagement. In December she went to the West, and early in the new year (1873) joined Mr. Lawrence Barrett's company in New Orleans. She was under an engagement to act with Mr. Barrett, but after a week she became very ill. She struggled, with almost superhuman determination, to adhere to her plans; each morning she declared herself better, and anticipated acting at night, but before the day was over she was forced to yield to her weakness, and was constantly disappointed. At last, wretched and suffering as she was, she made a fatiguing and comfortless journey to Philadelphia, and after a rest and medical care resumed her work in Washington in March.

I am not sure that the following anecdote belongs to this visit to New Orleans; but it is a well authenticated one, and I believe that the incident occurred at this time. Judge R——, who was famed for his good

dinners and his conversational powers, made a dinner-party for Miss Cushman. When they were seated at table, the Judge at the end and Miss Cushman on his right, she was attracted by the appearance of Mr. H——, who sat opposite her. Before long he spoke, and she was much interested in him; but the loquacious Judge gave little opportunity for any other person to talk, and as often as Miss Cushman asked a question to draw Mr. H—— out, so often the Judge interrupted and gave his opinion. At last Miss Cushman said, "Judge R——, may I be allowed to tell you that I wish to hear Mr. H—— talk a little?" or words to that effect.

Naturally the Judge subsided, but it was for the first time in his life; and as this occurred but a short time before his death it was sometimes jokingly said to have been fatal to him.

Mr. H—— accompanied Miss Cushman to her hotel; and in the course of the drive, which was three or four miles, she endeavored to persuade Mr. H—— that Forrest was not a good actor, and gave what seemed to her valid reasons for this opinion. When they reached the St. Charles, as she descended from the carriage, she said, "I hope I have convinced you, Mr. H——." With his courtly manner he lifted his hat, bowed, and said, "Charmed, Miss Cushman, but not converted!"

Everything in her life now seemed tinged with sadness. A deep, dark shadow hung over all, and some of her letters, written from 1872 to 1874, sound as if for herself the drama was ended and the curtain about to

fall. But for the sake of others she tried to be hopeful, to be the same strong friend on whom they had leaned so long. I give a few extracts from these letters, without dates or order, to tell in her own words how sad and suffering she was.

"I do get so dreadfully depressed about myself, and all things seem so hopeless to me at those times, that I pray God to take me quickly at any moment, so that I am not allowed to torture those I love by letting them see my pain. But when the dark hour passes, and I try to forget by constant occupation that I have had such a load near my heart, then it is not so bad."

To a friend in sorrow she wrote: —

"God bless you, and help you in all ways to bear, to endure, and be patient. This is the best prayer I can make for you, and it covers all the ground of a life. From my soul I make it a hundred times a day; but prayers are all I can give you to help you. I am not able to come to give you comfort and strength by my presence."

"I do not get over my dreadful depression and sickness of heart, and I cannot reason myself out of it. I suppose it is that I am weaker than ever before, and the summer has been a greater strain upon me than I knew until the reaction came. I have had much trial this summer, more than any one knows. First, the excitement of getting into the house; then the heat, the arrival of the things from Rome, and the sickness of soul over the memories that were awakened at the sight of them; but, most of all, the wrench I had at last in the departure of my children, the breaking up

and being left alone. I have been very lonely. This is a confession of weakness; but enough of myself."

She now constantly closed her letters with these words: "Ah, I pray God in his infinite mercy to take me quickly, that I may not wear out those who love me!"

Still she worked and worked on. From Toledo, in November, 1873, she wrote: —

"I have got off acting at a matinée, which was first intended; and I shall give thanks for that, and all the infinite mercies of God to me, for they are *manifold*. I am suffering a good deal more pain than I like to acknowledge, and only when I am on the stage or asleep am I unconscious of it. This has been unceasing since the summer, and I suppose I must expect it; but while I can bear it I am wrong to give any expression of it, even to you. It is wicked of me to say anything about it, and I have a great mind to destroy this letter; and yet, — and yet, when we regularly *face* our real troubles I believe they become more endurable, and the thought conveyed in one of your last letters, that anything happening to me would kill you, gives me much sad thought. I have been spared much longer than you or I ever thought possible when my trouble first declared itself. We ought to be better prepared by this time, and we must accept the inevitable; though I am a poor creature to talk in this way, for I cannot accept even the inevitable without fighting. I have fought, God knows, very hard for four years, especially the two last; but I know my enemy; he is ever before me, and he must conquer; but I can-

not give up to him. I laugh in his face, and try to be jolly, — and I am! I declare I am, even when he presses me hardest."

When in Chicago, during this winter, a very pleasant thing happened to her, in this wise. It was the last night of her engagement at M'Vicker's Theatre, and the company with whom she had acted had found her so kindly and friendly to all, from the most important member down to the people employed about the stage, that they had determined to give her a little testimonial of their regard. The gift was a heavy gold ring upon which was inscribed "KIND WORDS!"

Mr. M'Vicker presented it in behalf of the company. "During all the preliminary proceedings Miss Cushman had stood like one utterly at a loss to know what it was all about. The perspiration stood in beads on her forehead, and she who had faced hundreds of thousands glanced about as nervously and uneasily as the veriest novice. When, however, Mr. M'Vicker placed the ring in her hand with the accompanying letter, her expressive face relaxed into a broad smile of unmistakable surprise and pleasure, and, as a tear glistened for a moment in her eye and then stole down her cheek, in a few broken words she expressed her deep gratitude and delight at receiving such a token, in such a way, and from such a source."

In February, 1874, she was quite ill in Baltimore, but soon rallied, and then for a time seemed more hopeful, and later in the spring went through a laborious series of readings in New York. The following notice is from the *Tribune* of May 8, 1874. After say-

ing that Miss Cushman was received with great applause, and that all the seats in the Academy of Music were filled, it continues: —

"Miss Cushman's programme on Wednesday was less dramatic than either of its predecessors. . . . It is no slight matter to succeed, through the medium of a reading, in presenting eight or ten different persons, each distinctly individualized and made a living reality to the eyes of the imagination. Miss Cushman always effects this result, and she wrought it in her treatment of the 'Merchant of Venice.' It did not seem to us, however, that, in this instance, her portraitures, when they were finished and set before the mind, amounted to anything more than conventional creatures of the stage. Her *Shylock*, certainly, was invested with no color of that religious exaltation and Oriental majesty which makes him great in the pages of Shakespeare. His vindictive cruelty was made conspicuous, and was permitted to swallow up all other attributes. . . . The fact, probably, is that Miss Cushman feels no real sympathy with the play of 'The Merchant of Venice,' and finds nothing in it to arouse the imagination, the pathos, the weird and romantic glow of emotion that are the peculiar and thrilling qualities or powers of her nature. You cannot see her *Katherine* or *Wolsey* without experiencing a kind of rapture of anguish and awe; but you can see her *Shylock* with a calmness that is only disturbed by cold admiration for experienced mimetic skill. Her readings of *Antonio's* letter and *Portia's* speech on Mercy were the gems of elocutionary art; and there was the true spirit of comedy, the shimmer of a sparkling,

evanescent life, in her treatment of *Portia's* first colloquy with *Nerissa*. That same comedy spirit is in decadence upon our stage, and the sense of it, in Miss Cushman's acting, is like an echo of remembered music. It was in one — and but one — of the miscellaneous selections, following the scenes from Shakespeare, that those who recognized the magnetic power of Miss Cushman really felt its thrill, and saw, with sudden tremor, the flash of the eagle's wing. That was in her reading of 'The Whitby Fishing-Smack,' — a ballad of shipwreck and of the wild life of the sea-shore, in which are touched the elemental experiences and sorrows of common humanity. On Miss Cushman's humorous sketches there is no need to comment. In her, as in so many others who are essentially tragic artists, the brilliant flowers of comic humor blossom out of the deep heart of pathos. Her Scotch, Irish, and English Provincial dialect-reading has long been noted for its admirable accuracy, and for the easy grace and homely truth of the character-studies that underlie it and crop out through its verbal foliage."

George T. Ferris thus wrote of her readings: —

"Miss Cushman is now mainly confining herself to the reading-desk. There can be no question that her peculiar intellectualism in art is shown even more in her readings than in her acting, notably so in her Shakespearian readings. In the dramas of Shakespeare, the characters have so essential a play of relation, and are so subtle in their bearings on one another, that, unless they are all justly apprehended, the totality of the drama is maimed and marred. No genius on the

part of Charlotte Cushman could prevent this on the stage. In the reading-desk she reigns as the sole magician, with the perfect opportunity to express the finest attainments of her thinking and culture. She has but to wave her wand to unlock from the prison-house of Shakespeare's pages all the immortal phantoms that brood within them. It is for her alone to invest them with a splendid and subtile life.

"Miss Cushman's devotion to art remains unchanged. For many years she has been among those

> 'Who live to be the show and gaze of the time.'

That she may remain so for many years to come, and continue to illustrate her great conceptions, as none but she can, is the hope of thousands of admirers on both sides of the Atlantic."

While in New York for these readings (1874) Miss Cushman was undergoing a course of treatment which she believed for the time to be beneficial, and from which she took courage, as is shown in the following note: —

"I am satisfied that the treatment is doing me good; not, perhaps, by any evidence in my special malady, but in my general condition. I am feeling generally much better. I am certainly going through my work wonderfully; my spirits are better, and I can do more. I am sure it is the treatment. I am so settled in my faith in this, that I think I will consent to the engagement offered me at Booth's Theatre for October."

CHAPTER X.

1874–1875.

SHE continued the above medical treatment through the summer, and accepted the engagement at Booth's; but before the time for her appearance arrived, she knew too well that she should act but little more. Her courage in doing so at all seemed miraculous to those who were near her when off the stage, as well as to the actors who supported her. But she found relief in playing; in fact, the short time in which she was lost to herself in her public impersonations, when she was sleep-walking as *Lady Macbeth*, or dying as *Queen Katherine*, was the only time out of the whole twenty-four hours when she could forget her own mortal agony.

Miss Cushman had also made conditional engagements with other managers in different parts of the country, and when she entered upon her autumn's labors she had not determined upon taking a formal farewell of the stage. Thus, when the great ovation in New York was tendered her, she explained that she had other engagements to act, and that she had besides the intention of still appearing in public as a reader.

During her engagement at Booth's she personated her three great characters, and finally, on November 7,

she appeared as *Lady Macbeth*, with the following cast: —

Lady Macbeth	Miss Cushman.
Macbeth	Mr. George Vandenhoff.
Macduff	Mr. Frederic B. Warde.
Duncan	Mr. Edwin Sheppard.
Banquo	Mr. Charles Wheatleigh.
Malcolm	Mr. Charles Rockwell.
Hecate	Miss Annie Kemp Bowler.
Gentlewoman	Miss Emma Grattan.
First Witch	Mr. Charles Le Clerq.
Second Witch	Miss Mary Wells.
Third Witch	Mr. J. W. Brutone.

It is interesting to recall the fact that Mrs. Siddons and Mr. Macready had also chosen "Macbeth" as their final play. I shall give the account of this evening, and of the remarkable testimonial to Miss Cushman, which appeared in the *New York Tribune;* for, though long, all the incidents are of interest now that that evening has taken its place as an important event in the history of the American drama: —

"Remembrance will long keep in mind the incidents of Saturday night at Booth's Theatre, when Charlotte Cushman took her final leave of the metropolitan stage. The scene was one of quite extraordinary beauty. The spacious theatre — swept and cleansed and garnished — was crowded in every part, by an assemblage comprising the most that is worthy and distinguished in our civic circle of literature, art, learning, and society. Faces of known and honored persons were seen in every direction. The intellect and the beauty of the metropolis were represented as they very seldom are

SEYTON.....Mr. STUART BOLTON
FLEANCE.....Miss LILLY NAYLOR
DONALDBAIN.....Miss JENNY BYRON
PHYSICIAN.....Mr. JOHN WEAVER
GENTLEWOMAN.....Miss EMMA GRATTAN
FIRST WITCH.....Mr. CHARLES LECLERCQ
SECOND WITCH.....Miss MARY WELLS
THIRD WITCH.....Mr. J. W. BRUTONE
FIRST APPARITION.....Mr. FRANK LITTLE
WOUNDED OFFICER.....Mr. H. C. BRIDGES
FIRST MURDERER.....Mr. J. MAJOR
SECOND MURDERER.....THOMAS CONNER
OFFICERS.....Messrs. CARPENTER, TORRIANI, RANON, etc.

MATTHEW LOCKE'S ORIGINAL MUSIC will be interpreted under direction of Mr. MICHAEL CONNELLY, leader of the orchestra, and the songs, incantations, &c., will be by Miss Annie Kemp Bowler, Miss Mabel Lyndon, Miss Pauline Rutherford, Miss Maria Newman, Miss Jennie Dallimore, Miss Tilly Getchell, Miss Therese Phillips; Mr. Charles Pike, Mr. J. C. Chamberlain, Mr. W. E. Phillips, Mr. Charles Telbin. And the choruses by members of the

CRESCENT SINGING SOCIETY

For this eventful occasion the following appropriate ceremonies, supplementary to the play, have been arranged, and will be under the auspices of the ARCADIAN CLUB;

1. MUSIC by the ORCHESTRA, Mr. MICHAEL CONNELLY, Conductor.
2. READING by PROFESSOR ROBERTS, New York College, of an original ode, written for the occasion by the poet, R. H. STODDARD.
3. ADDRESS TO MISS CUSHMAN by the eminent citizen, WM. CULLEN BRYANT. Presentation of a Floral Tribute from the Arcadian Club.
4. RESPONSE by Miss CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

During these proceedings the stage will also be occupied by the ARCADIAN, ARMY AND NAVY, PALETTE, LOTOS, and MANHATTAN CLUBS; managers of the principal metropolitan and suburban theatres, with the leading members of their companies, and the journalistic profession.

Booth's Theatre

Lessees and Managers - - JARRETT & PALMER

ARCADIAN NIGHT

LAST NIGHT of the FAREWELL ENGAGEMENT of the illustrious Tragedienne, Miss

CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN

And her Final Appearance on the Metropolitan Stage.

This, Saturday Evening, November 7, 1874

When will be presented Shakspere's sublime tragedy,

MACBETH,

With the following ASSIGNMENT OF PARTS:

LADY MACBETH.....**Miss CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN**
MACBETH.....**Mr. GEORGE VANDENHOFF**
MACDUFF.....Mr. FREDERICK B. WARDE
DUNCAN.....Mr. EDWIN SHEPPARD
BANQUO.....Mr. CHARLES WHEATLEIGH
MALCOLM.....Mr. CHARLES ROCKWELL
HECATE.....Miss ANNIE KEMP BOWLER
ROSSE.....Mr. D. E. RALTON
LENOX.....Mr. E. K. COLLIER
SEYTON.....Mr. STUART BOLTON

in the theatres of to-day. The house was brilliantly illuminated, and it was decorated with a taste at once profuse and delicate. A tricolor, spangled with golden stars, was twined about the proscenium columns, and hung in festoons along the fronts of the galleries. The chandeliers were garlanded with autumn leaves, and with leaves and fruit of the vine, — symbolical of the maturity of that genius and the ripeness of that fame in which Miss Cushman retires from the theatre. Banners displaying the arms of the States were ranged along the upper tier. The flag of the Republic formed an arch over the central entrance, and flung its cheerful and hopeful folds over the proscenium boxes. In one of these boxes, inscribed in golden letters with the name of the Arcadian Club, — which society prompted this demonstration, and has carried it forward to signal and honorable success, — sat the poet Bryant, the poet Stoddard, Peter Cooper, and other distinguished guests of the club. In the opposite proscenium box, inscribed with the name of the Army and Navy Club, sat Major-General Hancock, Mr. Tilden, and other dignitaries of peace and of war. Perfumes, from great silver braziers upon the stage, made the air fragrant, and the dreamy music of the dear old Scotch melodies turned it into poetry and attuned every heart to sympathy with the spirit of the time. All that could be desired of intellect and brilliancy in an audience, and all that could be devised of tasteful accessories for a great occasion, were gathered and provided here; and the occasion proved in every way worthy of the motive that prompted it, the idea that it celebrated, and the anticipation it had aroused.

"Upon the performance there is now no reason to pause. It was marked by great and careful zeal in every respect, and it proved deeply impressive and satisfactory, and awoke at times the most emphatic approbation. Mr. Vandenhoff and Miss Cushman were four times called before the curtain, and Mr. Warde was recalled both at the end of *Macduff's* scene in act fourth and at the end of the play. Mr. Vandenhoff acted with all his usual correctness, and more than his usual fire, especially in the Banquet scene. Miss Cushman presented all those great tragic points of superlative excellence, and that profound and agonizing identification with the character, which have made her *Lady Macbeth* famous. The only new business was (and this may not be new to others) the method of terminating the third act, by making separate exits for the king and queen, and thus allowing *Lady Macbeth* a larger opportunity to express the ravages of her remorse. This was greatly done by Miss Cushman; but it sacrifices the pathetic idea of affectionate sympathy between these remorseful and horror-haunted murderers, in the desperation of their plight and in the awful eminence of their guilt and misery, and therefore is of questionable character. Miss Cushman's art in *Lady Macbeth* is perfect; and it would be easily possible to fill a column with enumeration of its subtle beauties, such as the shrinking from *Duncan's* hand, when he offers it to lead her into the castle, and such as the wonderful by-play in which she so continually denotes her sense of her husband's complex, kindly, irresolute character. But there is now no call for this. The personation has passed into history

as one of the greatest dramatic achievements of our age, and the word for the hour is not so much a recognition of its established excellence as of record of an ovation, not more brilliant than deserved, to illustrious genius and imperishable renown.

"It was about eleven o'clock when the curtain fell upon the tragedy. An interval ensued, which was filled with the hum of voices, the bustle of the moving multitude, and the music of Mr. Connelly's band. Then the curtain was again lifted, and one of the most distinguished companies that have ever been seen in a public place came into view. The stage was crowded. Prominent in the throng were Mr. Wallack, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Boucicault, Mr. Gilbert, Miss Charlotte Thompson, and other professional friends of Miss Cushman. The venerable face of William Cullen Bryant, austere yet tender, shone out of the central throng. Mr. Charles Roberts, who had been selected by the Arcadian Club to read Mr. Stoddard's Ode, appeared at the right of the stand, which was wrought of the beautiful floral testimonials offered to Miss Cushman. The actress herself, hailed by plaudits that almost shook the building, entered and took her place upon the left of the stage; and the ceremonies of farewell began. Mr. Stoddard's poem carries along with it its own testimonial. It is conceived and written in a simple spirit and style; it is worthy of the genuine theme and the lofty occasion; and it was uttered with sympathy and force, and received with every mark of public pleasure, — the applause at the end of the stanza which couples Cushman with Shakespeare being in a marked degree spontaneous and emphatic, and

the demonstration at the close being as full of heart as of sound, which is saying much for its fervor. Mr. Stoddard, writing in a difficult verse, because so simple in form and so devoid of ornament, and on a subject so difficult to treat with freshness of feeling and novelty of thought, has herein done great credit to his own delicate genius as well as suitable honor to the greatest actress of our time. The Ode is here given: —

SALVE, REGINA.

BY RICHARD HENRY STODDARD.

The race of greatness never dies;
Here, there, its fiery children rise,
Perform their splendid parts,
And captive take our hearts.

Men, women, of heroic mould,
Have overcome us from of old;
Crowns waited then, as now,
For every royal brow.

The victor in the Olympian Games —
His name among the proudest names
Was handed deathless down:
To him the olive crown.

And they, the poets, grave and sage,
Stern masters of the tragic stage,
Who moved by art austere
To pity, love, and fear, —

To these was given the laurel crown,
Whose lightest leaf conferred renown
That through the ages fled
Still circles each gray head.

But greener laurels cluster now,
World-gathered, on his spacious brow,
In his supremest place,
Greatest of their great race, —

Shakespeare! Honor to him, and her
Who stands his great interpreter,
Stepped out of his broad page,
Upon the living stage.

The unseen hands that shape our fate
Moulded her strongly, made her great,
And gave her for her dower
Abundant life and power.

To her the sister Muses came,
Proffered their masks, and promised fame:
She chose the tragic — rose
To its imperial woes.

What queen unqueened is here? What wife,
Whose long bright years of loving life
Are suddenly darkened? Fate
Has crushed, but left her great.

Abandoned for a younger face,
She sees another fill her place,
Be more than she has been —
Most wretched wife and queen.

O royal sufferer! Patient heart!
Lay down thy burdens and depart:
"Mine eyes grow dim. Farewell."
They ring her passing bell.

And thine, thy knell shall soon be rung,
Lady, the valor of whose tongue,
That did not urge in vain,
Stung the irresolute Thane

To bloody thoughts and deeds of death —
The evil genius of Macbeth;
But thy strong will must break,
And thy poor heart must ache.

Sleeping, she sleeps not; night betrays
The secret that consumes her days.
Behold her where she stands,
And rubs her guilty hands.

From darkness, by the midnight fire,
Withered and weird, in wild attire,
Starts spectral on the scene
The stern old Gypsy Queen.

She croons his simple cradle song,
She will redress his ancient wrong, —
The rightful heir come back
With Murder on his track.

Commanding, crouching, dangerous, kind,
Confusion in her darkened mind,
The pathos of her years
Compels the soul to tears.

Bring laurel! Go, ye tragic Three,
And strip the sacred laurel-tree,
And at her feet lay down
Here, now, a triple crown.

Salve, Regina! Art and Song,
Dismissed by thee, shall miss thee long,
And keep thy memory green —
Our most illustrious Queen.

"Mr. Roberts delivered this poem with a calm force and an appropriate diversity of expression, which, under the trying circumstances of the hour, can only be described as extraordinary. Seldom in a lifetime does it occur to any man to have such an audience as listened to this utterance, and found poetry made more poetic by the speaker's earnest soul and melodious voice.

"Mr. Bryant, who was received with a tumult of applause, next addressed Miss Cushman in a speech of equal simplicity and fitness, of which the essential part is here printed: —

'MADAM, — The members of the Arcadian Club have desired me to present to you the Crown of Laurel. Although of late years little familiar with matters connected with the stage, I make it a pleasure to comply with their request. Be pleased to receive it as both a token of their proud admiration of your genius and their high esteem for your personal character. You remember the line of the poet, Spenser, —

"The laurel, meed of mighty conquerors."

Well is that line applied in the present instance. The

laurel is the proper ornament for the brows of one who has won so eminent and enviable a renown by successive conquests in the realm of histrionic art. You have taken a queenly rank in your profession. You have carried into one department of it after another the triumphs of your genius. You have interpreted, through the eye and ear, to the sympathies of vast assemblages of men and women, the words of the greatest dramatic writers. What came to your hand in the skeleton form you have clothed with sinews and flesh, and given it warm blood and a beating heart. Receive, then, the laurel crown as a token of what is conceded to you, as a symbol of the regal state in your profession to which you have risen, and which you so illustriously hold.'

"Miss Cushman — who during the delivery of the poem and address had maintained an attitude in which natural dignity and the effort at composure struggled with deep feeling and an instinctive wish to deprecate so much eulogium — responded in the following words: —

'"Beggar that I am, — I am even poor in thanks," but I thank you! Gentlemen, the heart has no speech; its only language is a tear or a pressure of the hand, and words very feebly convey or interpret its emotions. Yet I would beg you to believe that in the three little words I now speak — "I thank you" — there are heart-depths which I should fail to express better though I should use a thousand other words. I thank you, gentlemen, for the great honor you have offered to me. I thank you not only for myself, but for my whole profession, to which, through and by

me, you have paid this very graceful compliment. (Applause.)

"'If the few words I am about to say savor of egotism or vainglory, you will, I am sure, pardon me, inasmuch as I am here only to speak of myself! You would seem to compliment me upon an honorable life. As I look back upon that life it seems to me that it would have been absolutely impossible for me to have led any other. In this I have, perhaps, been mercifully helped more than are many of my more beautiful sisters in art. I was, by a press of circumstances, thrown at an early age into a profession for which I had received no special education or schooling, but I had already, though so young, been brought face to face with necessity. I found life sadly real and intensely earnest; and in my ignorance of other ways of study, I resolved to take therefrom my text and my watchword; to be thoroughly in earnest, intensely in earnest, in all my thoughts and in all my actions, whether in my profession or out of it, became my one single idea. And I honestly believe herein lies the secret of my success in life. I do not believe that any great success in any art can be achieved without it!

"'I say this to the beginners in my profession; and I am sure all the associates in my art, who have honored me with their presence on this occasion, will indorse what I say in this. Art is an absolute mistress; she will not be coquetted with or slighted; she requires the most entire self-devotion, and she repays with grand triumphs! (Vehement applause.)

"'To you, Gentlemen of the Arcadian Club, and to

all who have united to do me honor; to the younger poet who has enthroned me in his verse, and to the older poet who brings the prestige of his name and fame to add a glory to the crown he offers me; to the managers of this theatre, who have so liberally met all my wishes and requirements during this engagement, as well as to the members of the company who have so cheerfully seconded my efforts; and last, not least, to the members of my profession who have so graciously added by their presence to the happiness of this occasion, — I return my cordial thanks.

"'To my public, — what shall I say? From the bottom of my heart I thank you, who have given me always consideration, encouragement, and patience; who have been ever my support, my comfort, my main help! I do not now say farewell to you in the usual sense of the word. In making my final representations upon the mimic scene, in the various cities of the country, I have reserved to myself the right of meeting you again — where you have made me believe that I give you the pleasure, which I receive myself at the same time — at the reading desk. (Great excitement.) To you, then, I say, may you fare well, and may I fare well, until at no distant day we meet again there. Meanwhile, good, kind friends, good-night! and God be with you.'

"The whole of this was spoken in a most sympathetic way, but the portion of it in which Miss Cushman addressed the public had, perhaps, the strongest effect. This was very earnest and tender, and there were tones in the speaker's voice which meant more than words.

At the close of this address, after the applause subsided, Miss Annie Kemp Bowler came forward and sang the sweet, familiar song of 'Auld Lang Syne,' in the chorus to which the entire throng upon the stage, and finally some persons in the audience, heartily joined; and amidst this touching music, and the mighty plaudits of four thousand spectators, the curtain finally fell upon the Farewell appearance of Charlotte Cushman.

"Among the prominent citizens who took part in this demonstration, appearing in the boxes and upon the stage, were the following: the Hon. Henry G. Stebbins, Governor-elect Samuel J. Tilden, the Hon. William M. Evarts, Mayor-elect William H. Wickham, Algernon S. Sullivan, Charles Watrous, the Hon. Edwards Pierrepont, the Hon. Clarence A. Seward, the Hon. B. W. Griswold, Peter Cooper, Abram S. Hewitt, Sidney Webster, the Hon. R. B. Roosevelt, Judge John R. Brady, Parke Godwin, G. G. Haven, J. M. Bundy, Professor R. Ogden Doremus, Clark Bell, S. N. Salomon, E. G. Thompson, B. K. Phelps, W. R. Travers, W. H. Vanderbilt, Colonel John Hay, E. Agramonte, Albert Weber, J. N. Pattison, Charles Roberts, Harry Palmer, W. H. Hurlburt, William Stuart, Rufus Hatch, J. H. Beard, Homer A. Nelson, D. R. Locke, J. W. Carroll, N. Sarony, P. S. Gilmore, Patrick H. Jones, J. B. Polk, Harry Jarrett, D. H. Harkins, Edwin R. Meade, F. B. Warde, Claude Burroughs, Laurence Hutton, C. Delmonico, H. Tissington, J. Wilson Macdonald, F. R. Stockton, Constant Mayer, Daniel D. Telford, Edward Moran, Harrison Millard, Thomas LeClear, Harry Beckett, and H. B. Dodworth.

". . . From Booth's Theatre to the Fifth Avenue Hotel the street was so packed towards midnight as to be almost impassable. A glare of light — from the theatre-porch, the torches of the Arcadian procession, and the street-lamps — illuminated the turbulent scene; and presently, from the direction of Madison Square, a burst of Roman candles and rockets added to the brilliance and excitement of this memorable midnight hour. Miss Cushman entered a carriage opposite the stage-door, and amidst the cheers of the populace, and a tumult like that of the old-fashioned Fourth-of-July, was driven to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where she presently appeared on the balcony and greeted the populace, while the Ninth Regiment Band performed a serenade, and the spaces and vistas of Madison Square were illumined with fireworks."

Of this evening Miss Cushman in one letter wrote as follows: —

"I acted eight times last week, besides that fearful affair after the play on Saturday. They say such a demonstration has never been made before, not even political. The number of people in front of the hotel must have been near twenty-five thousand, and it looked exactly like the Piazza del Popolo at the fireworks. I wish the children could have seen it; it was a thing they should have seen, to remember in connection with their 'big mamma.' You must tell them all about it, — how the whole big square in front of the Fifth Avenue Hotel was crammed with human beings. They could not move, they were so densely packed.

"The sight in the theatre was magnificent. Then

the ceremony at the end, which had made me sick all the week, for I was frightened lest I should forget what I had to say. Then I did not know what they were going to do, for when I would protest against this or that they would tell me it should not be, and yet I felt sure they would do what they pleased; and so it turned out; for, though I said that if they carried out their plan of white horses and escort with torches, etc., I would remain in the theatre all night, yet, when I got into my carriage at the private (carpenters') entrance on Twenty-third Street, expecting to go quietly to the hotel, where I had invited private friends to meet me, I found myself surrounded by a mass of human beings with torches and fireworks, rockets sent up all the way along up to the front entrance of the hotel, and a most indescribable noise and confusion. The corridors of the hotel were as crowded as the streets outside, and I could scarcely make my way along. Then, after a time, I had to make my appearance in the balcony, and then the shouting was something awful to hear. I was ready to drop with fatigue, so I could only wave my handkerchief to them, and went in, not getting to my bed before half past two."

Flattering as this demonstration was in one view, many regrets were felt and expressed by Miss Cushman's friends that she ever consented to give her countenance to it; the feeling being in this, as in other similar cases, that the genius that could command such an ovation should hold itself above receiving it.

One week later Miss Cushman again appeared as *Lady Macbeth* in her farewell to Philadelphia. During

the evening she was several times called on, and received a profusion of magnificent and costly floral tributes. After the play she thus addressed the audience: —

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, — Accustomed as I am to speak before you the impassioned words of genius, to give utterance to the highest ideas of the poet and the dramatist, I yet feel that my poor tongue must falter when it is called upon to speak, for itself alone, so sad a word as Farewell; or when it tries to thank you fitly for all your kindness to me in the past, for all the honor you do me in the present. I have never, to the best of my knowledge and belief, altered a line of Shakespeare in my life; but now, in taking my leave of the stage, I shall beg your permission to paraphrase him, the more fitly to express what I would say to you; for it is his peculiar glory that none other in the whole range of literature has written words which apply more fully to every want of the soul, to every feeling of the heart. Let me say, then, partly in his words: —

'All my service
In every point twice done, and then done double,
Were poor and single business to contend
Against these honors, deep and broad, wherewith
You have ever loaded me. For those of old,
And the late dignities heaped up to them,
I rest your debtor.'

"In the earlier part of my professional career Philadelphia was for some years my happy home. Here I experienced privately the greatest kindness and hospitality, publicly the utmost goodness and consideration; and I never come to Philadelphia without the affection-

ate feeling that I am coming home, and to my family. This would make my Farewell too hard to be spoken, were it not that, though I am taking my leave of the stage, I have reserved to myself the right and the pleasant anticipation of appearing before you, where you have flattered me with the belief that my efforts are not unacceptable to you, at the reading desk. Until, at no distant day, we meet again there, — good-night, and all good be with you."

From Philadelphia Miss Cushman went to Trenton, Baltimore, and Washington, giving readings in each place, intending to proceed farther West, and finally to pass a portion of the season in California, where she had long desired to go; but by the time she reached Cincinnati she was seriously ill. She was forced to change her plans, and relinquished that of seeing California with much regret. However, she was not long idle, for as soon as possible she resumed her readings, and after appearing in other places, was again in New York before Christmas.

In February, 1875, Miss Cushman made her last appearance in Albany, a few months more than thirty-eight years from the time when she had first appeared there, Oct. 11, 1836, when she acted *Lady Macbeth* to the *Macbeth* of the elder Booth. On this last occasion she read in Tweddle Hall; and after three days went to Chicago, where she acted from the 15th to the 26th of the month; and appeared on the following night in Cincinnati, where she filled an engagement of a week before going to St. Louis. She had a hard journey, and only reached the latter city in time to hurry to

the theatre, which she did in spite of her weariness and wretched health. She appeared there five nights, though it cost her days of illness; but she preferred this to breaking an engagement. In view of what has been told of her malady, her sufferings, and her mental condition, all this eagerness to act can now be understood; but it is not strange that at the time, when the public were in ignorance of the truth, many things were written and said which were unjust to Miss Cushman, and added their part to what she had to bear.

Later in the season she read to a house of three thousand persons in Philadelphia. It was during this winter that she saw Ristori as *Elizabeth* and *Marie Antoinette.* She thus wrote of her: "She is the greatest female artist I have ever seen. Such perfect nature, such ease, such grace, such elegance of manner, — such as befits a queen. . . . Her voice is the most lovely, and her mouth the most fascinating, after Titiens, of any artist I ever saw."

In letters written at this time she speaks with doubt as to whether she shall be able to fulfil her engagements or not, but constantly expresses her determination to do so if possible. So the winter passed, and only those who were near her knew what a period of suffering it was, for the public could perceive few signs of it; but once off the stage — in the anteroom, in travelling, in company, or alone — her "enemy," as she termed her disease, was omnipresent.

Finally, on May 15, she made her last appearance in Boston. During her engagement, which was at the Globe Theatre, she had assumed her usual rôles, and

now, as before, made her farewell as *Lady Macbeth.* We have given, in the first chapter of this book, the programme of her first night in public: we now give that of the last.

THE GLOBE THEATRE PROGRAMME.

Proprietor and Manager . . . . . *Arthur Cheney.*
Stage Manager and Director . . . . . *D. W. Waller.*

This evening

MISS CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN

will impersonate her celebrated rôle of

LADY MACBETH,

assisted by

MR. D. W. WALLER AS MACBETH.

Immediately after the performance, MISS CUSHMAN will be presented with a testimonial given by a number of her friends, on which occasion the presentation address will be delivered by MR. CURTIS GUILD.

SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 15, 1875,

last appearance on any stage of

MISS CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN,

supported by

MR. D. W. WALLER,

when will be performed Shakespeare's sublime Tragedy of

MACBETH.

Duncan . . . . . *Mr. J. C. Dunn.*
Malcolm } His Sons . . . . . { *Mr. Lin Harris.*
Donalbain } His Sons . . . . . { *Miss Wilkes.*

Macbeth, Banquo	Generals in the King's Army	Mr. D. W. Waller. Mr. C. P. Fyffe.
Macduff, Lenox, Rosse	Noblemen of Scotland . . .	Mr. G. B. Waldron. Mr. R. B. Darcie. Mr. Stuart Clarke.
Fleance, Son to Banquo		Miss Portia Albey.
Siward, Earl of Northumberland, General of the English Forces		Mr. S. Howard.
Seyton, an Officer attending on Macbeth .		Mr. J. P. Deuel.
Wounded Officer		Mr. W. A. Sands.
Porter		Mr. R. Charles.
First Apparition		Miss Lizzie Queen.
Second Apparition		Miss Addie Vankenish.
Third Apparition		Miss Pelby.
First Officer		Mr. Geo. Connor.
Second Officer		Mr. John Taylor.
First Murderer		Mr. J. Pitman.
Second Murderer		Mr. T. B. Francis.
Physician		Mr. C. Pierson.
First Witch		Mr. E. Coleman.
Second Witch		Miss Annie Hayes.
Third Witch		Mr. J. H. Connor.
Lady Macbeth		Miss Cushman.
Gentlewoman		Miss Athena.

Lords, Ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Attendants, etc., by the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Company.

The following account of the evening is from the *Boston Daily Advertiser*. It was a far more quiet affair than that in New York, but was a heartfelt testimonial of respect to Miss Cushman and of pride in her great achievements: —

"The scene at the Globe Theatre on Saturday evening was one that will remain long in the memories of those present, and as an occasion of great pleasure and also one that excited sentiments of regret that America's greatest tragic actress had for the last time appeared in

the characters which she has been wont to assume. The theatre presented a fine appearance when the curtain was rung up for the performance of 'Macbeth,' the play selected by Miss Cushman for her farewell to the stage, and among the vast audience many gentlemen might have been seen who have not been familiar with the theatres of the last two decades. There were among those present representatives of the best of Boston's social, mercantile, and professional circles, and few public gatherings have better represented its culture and refinement.

"Miss Cushman, on her appearance, was greeted with prolonged applause, which was often repeated in the course of the play. At the conclusion of the last act, a selection of national airs was performed by the orchestra, the audience remaining to participate in the closing exercises. When the curtain was raised again, the stage presented the appearance of a drawing-room, and in its centre stood a gilt table upon which rested a floral crown with laurel wreath. Upon either side were placed bronze statuettes of Mercury and Fortune, about thirty inches high, and resting upon handsomely carved pedestals. Other floral decorations were arranged about the stage. After a moment's pause, Mr. Cheney entered from the left, leading Miss Cushman, whom he briefly presented.

"Mr. Curtis Guild then addressed Miss Cushman as follows:—

"'*Miss Cushman, and Ladies and Gentlemen,*—The retirement from the dramatic profession of one who has so long been recognized as one of its most distin-

guished representatives, and who has done so much to elevate dramatic art, is in itself an event of more than ordinary moment. But when it occurs here, in the native city of the artist, and among those who have followed her from the commencement of her eventful career with hope and admiration, and claimed her as our own with pride at its culmination, it is felt that the occasion should not be permitted to pass without an attempt to express, in the most decided manner, the feelings of your many friends, who deem it a privilege to do you honor. Now that you are about to cast aside the robes of the artist forever; to abdicate, not resign, the dramatic sceptre of the American stage, — for who is to wield that which you have so long swayed as queen? — now that you are to close your eventful and successful career with a fame honorably won and name untarnished, — you that have "outstripped all praise and made it halt behind you," — it is not surprising that every true lover of dramatic art hastens to do eager homage, and that hosts of warm and hearty friends should press forward for the last hand-grasp of her whom they honor and respect.

"'We cannot part with the great actress of our time but with emotion and tender regard. We remember the many hours of intellectual enjoyment for which we are indebted to her; how the characters of the great bard, by the potent mystic wand of her creative genius, have appeared to actually live before us, as we were thrilled with horror by the fierce ambition of the murderous wife of the Scottish Thane, or our hearts pulsated with pity for the wrongs of the noble and

abused queen of the bluff and bloody Henry, or beat with emotion for the gentle lovers of Verona. And what additional interest has been lent to one, at least, of those remarkable creations of the great Scottish novelist, by a portraiture of character that shall ever live, while the history of dramatic art is chronicled, as one of the most wonderful and impressive ever presented upon the dramatic stage. It may truthfully be said, after witnessing your impersonations, yours is

> "The spell o'er hearts
> Which only acting lends,—
> The youngest of the sister Arts,
> Where all their beauty blends.
> For ill can Poetry express
> Full many a tone of thought sublime;
> And Painting, mute and motionless,
> Steals but a glance of time;
> But, by the mighty Actor brought,
> Illusion's perfect triumphs come,—
> Verse ceases to be airy thought,
> And Sculpture to be dumb."

"'The player's profession, we well know, from the earliest days, when in Greece it was held honorable and in Rome a despised vocation, has been assailed by fierce opponents. The great poet of our time himself, we read in the "Annals of the English Stage," came into the world when the English portion of it was ringing with the denunciations of Archbishop Grindal against the profession which the child in his humble cradle at Stratford-upon-Avon was about to ennoble forever. We need not, however, go back as far as Shakespeare's time to cite the fierce opposition

that dramatic art has encountered, or enumerate the obstacles that the dramatic artist must overcome. The discouragements in the thorny path of the profession may well make genius, even when accompanied by resolution, almost shrink from attempting it. Let us remember, however, that the art has been sanctioned by the great, befriended by the good, and supported by the people; and, moreover, bear in mind that in this profession, whose members are in the full blaze of public observation and scrutiny, who are too often censured without reason or condemned without excuse, who are too frequently judged as a class for the errors of individuals, — those who *do* pass the fiery ordeal unscathed, who stand before us the real representatives of the dramatic profession, deserve from us our garlands as the exponents of a great and glorious art; and, upon the present occasion, more than that, — the high regard that genius, combined with nobleness of mind and purity of character, exacts from all true and honest hearts. We have beheld with pride, in our modern Athens, the laurels awarded our warriors, the bays bestowed upon our poets, and our scholars and orators

> "Win the wreath of fame
> And write on memory's scroll a deathless name."

And with equal exultation is it that we contemplate the addition that has been made to that brilliant circle of dramatic lights which counts in its constellation a Garrick, a Kemble, and a Siddons, of our own American luminary which sparkles with equal brilliancy to that of any of its great associates. We come here to-night to

accord that homage which genius does not ask, but commands; to give you, not evidence of popularity, — mere popularity which is as the brightness of the passing meteor or the fleeting splendors of the rainbow, — but to express an appreciation of genius and the kind regard of genuine friendship. As the humble instrument of those who have honored me with this pleasing but difficult task, I am aware that their sentiments have been but imperfectly expressed; but in asking you to accept, in the name of your friends in this your native city, this evidence of their regard, I know I express their feelings in saying, "the greatest is behind;" for beyond this comparatively trifling token of esteem of your merits as an artist, is a friendship which, though death may sever, time shall not destroy. And in conclusion let me say, that though you may now pass from the mimic stage, distant be the day when your exit shall be made from the great stage on which we men and women all are merely players; though you may not have our hands in future before the curtain, they will still cordially grasp yours in the social circle which you adorn as modestly as you have upheld the dramatic art worthily and honorably. And now, when we depart, and when

> "Fallen is the curtain, the last scene is o'er,
> The fav'rite actress treads the stage no more,"

we shall each and all of us remember that though

> "Many the parts you played, yet to the end
> Your best were those of sister, lady, friend."'

"When Miss Cushman could sufficiently master the emotions which controlled her, she replied in the following terms: —

'"The less I deserve,
The more merit lies in your bounty."

"'GENTLEMEN, — Your unexpected kindness deprives me of all words in which to thank you, and the few I can find will be but poor and feeble expressions of what I feel. But I would beg you to believe all that the heart prompts, as my deep and earnest appreciation of the honor you have done me. It is especially grateful because it comes to me here, in my own native city, and at the hands of those who, from the beginning to the end of my career, from my first appearance on the stage to my last appearance, have been truly

"Brothers, friends, and countrymen."

In leaving the stage finally, it has always been my intention to make my last appearance in Boston; and this suggests to me a little explanation, which, with your permission, I would like to make on this occasion. It has been implied, if not declared, and very often repeated in the newspapers throughout the country, that I should not have appeared again upon the stage after the great ovation which was paid to me in New York. At least, so the gentlemen of the press decided; and many comments have been made upon me, in the papers, derogatory to my dignity as a woman and my position as an artist. I have passed on, in the even tenor of my way, little regarding, on my own account, these would-be censors and judges; but it seems to me

proper that I should explain to *you*, in whose esteem I have a long-vested interest which must not be endangered without a strong and earnest protest on my part, that if my last engagement in New York was announced as my farewell to the stage, it was done by no act or will or word of mine. I had no such intention; indeed, I could not have had, for I had already made many other engagements for the season, which I have been endeavoring to fulfil, concluding, as was always my dearest wish, here in my own city of Boston, which I have always dearly loved, and where I had rather have been born than on any other spot of the habitable globe. I hope I have not tired your patience, but I could not rest without endeavoring to remove even the shadow of a shade which might cloud the perfect harmony between me and my public, who I hope and trust will accept this explanation from me. Looking back upon my career, I think I may, "without vainglory," say that I have not, by any act of my life, done discredit to the city of my birth.'

"Then, turning to the gentlemen of the committee of presentation, Miss Cushman continued: —

"'So now, with a full but more free heart, I revert to you. To this last beautiful manifestation of your good will towards me, and to all who have so graciously interested themselves to do me this honor, I can but say, —

"More is their due
Than more than all can pay."

"'Believe me, I shall carry away with me in my retirement no memory sweeter than my associations

with Boston and my Boston public. From my full heart, God bless you, and Farewell!'"

After leaving Boston Miss Cushman read a few times in Western New York, and, on June 2, in Easton, Pennsylvania, after which I find no record of any public appearance. She then went to Lenox, Massachusetts, to superintend the fitting up of a house which she had purchased there. She found it best to leave Newport as the summer advanced, when the change from the sea-shore to the mountain air was beneficial to her. During this, her last summer at Newport, she was very ill, and when at last she revived sufficiently to go to Lenox, the bracing air acted like a charm upon her, restoring her to a certain degree of strength. Miss Stebbins thus speaks of Miss Cushman's plans regarding this new home: —

"The pleasure and enjoyment she found in this small spot were delightful to see; all its appointments were of a simple, homely kind, which added the charm of contrast to the elegant attractions of her Newport home. She brought with her there the same simplicity of taste and adaptability to her surroundings which made for her a home wherever she might be. She always enjoyed a return to the modest housekeeping of her early days, when Sallie and herself used to rough it so contentedly together. Everything interested her, on the small scale as on the large one; her mind was busy, active, suggestive, and full of purpose and energy. She had no room for petty cares or trivial conventionalities; she *made* her surroundings suitable and appropriate, and where she was, no one ever thought of anything else.

The little place would have been as complete in its way as the larger one, if her life had been spared; but she was only permitted to enjoy a few days of it at this time, and again, later in the season, a few weeks, after a long and severe illness at Newport, which for a time seemed to make it doubtful if she might ever see it again."

CHAPTER XI.

1875–1876.

MISS CUSHMAN still cherished a hope of finding some alleviation of her malady, and decided to put herself under a new mode of treatment; for that purpose she went to Boston in October, 1875, and established herself at the Parker House. She suffered terribly, but she bore up bravely; saw her friends, and interested herself in literary matters and subjects of general interest. Those who saw her frequently knew by the changes in her face that she was in pain; but she seldom mentioned her health, and when she did, gave as few words as possible to it. Until within two days of her death she wrote to her family in Newport each day. Some of her letters were very cheerful, and even as late as February 3 she spoke of her going to California as a future possibility. The day before Christmas she wrote: —

"This is not the greeting you should have for your Christmas; but it is better you should know exactly where I am, and that we may have to defer the celebration of our Christmas to another and happier day. Just feel as though to-morrow was any common day, — for is not Christ here to us every day? And we will show our belief in this by trying to have faith and trust,

and make the celebration of it when that trust and faith are borne out and justified by time! I grieve for you, dear, more than for myself, though I am a dreadful baby over my pain. It is very hard for you; but the hard places must come in our lives, and perhaps we should not know how to enjoy the pleasures, but for the corresponding glooms of the pains of life. Keep up a good heart. You are loved and thought of as you *would* be, and that must give you courage for the battle which is before you as before us all!"

On Christmas day she again wrote: —

"The doctor is very hopeful, and says I am better. When I hear him talk I am ashamed that I give way under pain and cause such suffering to those I love; but I cannot help it. It is beyond me, and those who love me must bear with me; and if ever I get well I will repay them with interest in mirthfulness and joy until they shall wonder at the merry old woman!"

Her friends, however, were very despondent, and soon after the New Year, 1876, she was very low. She then gave minute directions for her funeral services, and her burial in the lot which she had purchased at Mount Auburn, — a spot which she loved because it commanded a view of Boston. After this time she again rallied, and even seemed to others to be positively better for a time. On January 27, after hearing of the sorrow of a friend, she wrote: —

"Ah, I am ashamed of the outcry I have made over mere physical pain, when the world is so full of 'carking care,' which corrodes the soul! God forgive me for fretting and complaining. I have not known what

else to do, and impotence is *my* curse and cross. Ah, please his infinite mercy that I am ever *well* again, will we not be happy and good, and love him more and more every day?"

Finally, after this season of apparent mending, on Feb. 12, 1876, while walking in the corridor of the hotel, she took a cold, pneumonia ensued, and six days later all was over. She did not suffer pain at last, neither did she realize what she was passing through. The evening before her death she wished to have Lowell's poem of "Columbus" read to her, and when the reader hesitated Miss Cushman supplied the word or line with perfect clearness. This incident suggested the following lines, signed "C. T. E." —

"For wast not thou, too, going forth alone
To seek new land across an untried sea?
New land, — yet to thy soul not all unknown,
Nor yet far off, was that blest shore to thee.

"For thou hadst felt the mighty mystery
That on man's heart and life doth ever rest,
A shadow of that glorious world to be,
Where love's pure hope is with fruition blest.

"Thine was a conflict none else knew but God,
Who gave thee, to endure it, strength divine:
Alone with him the wine-press thou hast trod,
And Death, his angel, seals the victory thine.

"The narrow sea of death thou now hast passed;
The mist is lifted from the unseen land;
The voyage ends, the shining throng at last
Meet thee with welcome on the heavenly strand."

128. East 16 St.
Oct. 26 1874

Dear Sir

I am in receipt of your note of the 22nd inst. Expressing your desire & that of the members of your Club to do me honour on the last evening of my present sojourn in New York. Allow me to thank you heartily for the kind and cordial manner in which you have conveyed to me this evidence of the esteem & regard of your associates.

It will give me much pleasure to visit you & them on the evening in question & to have the opportunity of expressing to them personally my high appreciation of their courteous attention towards me.

Remaining, always -

My faithfully Yours obliged

Alfred S. Sullivan Esq
Hon. President Arcadian Club
52. Wilson Road

Thus Charlotte Cushman passed from life in all her fortitude to hope and to bear. Doubtless, had she known that the hour was at hand she would still have been calm and brave; perhaps in those last unconscious hours bright visions waited on her passing spirit, and as so often heretofore she had called them up in imagination, now in truth might she have said, —

> "Saw you not, even now, a blessed troop
> Invite me to a banquet; whose bright faces
> Cast thousand beams upon me, like the sun?"
>
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . .

On February 21, for an hour before the funeral, the public was admitted to the room in which she lay. The funeral was in King's Chapel, and the ceremonies were very simple. Many beautiful flowers were sent from far and near, symbols of the sweet memories of her which her friends and associates cherished.

All over the country the papers bore witness to the general feeling of loss occasioned by her death, and all united in awarding her that enviable fame which belongs alone to the great men and women who rise to their heights through their own merits and labors, a fame in which she can never be superseded in the history of the American drama, and one which should be a guiding star and an inspiring force to those who seek to follow where she led.

Some of the tributes paid her at this time are copied here. William Winter wrote: —

"There is something so awfully impressive in the vanishing of a great genius and a great force of noble

intellect and character out of this world, that reverence must pause before the spectacle, no less in humanity than sorrow. The historian of our time will review many important and significant lives, and will lay the laurel upon many a storied tomb; but he will honor no genius more stately or more singular than that which now sleeps in the coffin of Charlotte Cushman. . . . To the last she was an image of majesty. The pain that consumed her suffering body could never quell her royal spirit. She could look back upon a good life; she was sustained by religious faith; she felt upon her gray hair the spotless crown of honor; she met death as she had met life, a victor; and she has passed from the world with all the radiance of her glory about her, like sunset from a mountain peak, that vanishes at once into the heavens.

"The greatness of Charlotte Cushman was that of an exceptional, because grand and striking personality, combined with extraordinary power to embody the highest ideals of majesty, pathos, and appalling anguish. She was not a great actress merely, but she was a great woman. She did not possess the dramatic faculty apart from other faculties, and conquer by that alone; but, having that faculty in almost unlimited fulness, she poured forth through its channel such resources of character, intellect, moral strength, soul and personal magnetism as marked her for a genius of the first order while they made her an irresistible force in art. When she came upon the stage she filled it with the brilliant vitality of her presence. Every movement that she made was winningly characteristic. Her least ges-

ture was eloquence. Her voice, which was soft or silvery, or deep and mellow, according as emotion affected it, used now and then to tremble, and partly to break, with tones that were pathetic beyond description. These were denotements of the fiery soul that smouldered beneath her grave exterior, and gave iridescence to every form of art that she embodied. Sometimes her whole being seemed to become petrified in a silent suspense more thrilling than any action, as if her imagination were suddenly inthralled by the tumult and awe of its own vast proportions." . . .

The following letter was written by Mr. Lawrence Barrett: —

"Charlotte Cushman is dead. Before the shock of this news has passed away it cannot be improper to recall to her professional brethren the great loss we sustain by this sudden departure. After a long life of toil, laden with years and honors, she sleeps at last. That crown which she has worn for so many years undisputed now lies upon a coffin beside which a whole nation will mourn. The world contained no greater spirit, no nobler woman. Her genius filled the world with admiration, and the profession which she adorned and ruled must long await her successor. This is not the place, nor is mine the pen, to write her history; larger space and abler hands will see that duty performed. These lines are traced by one who loved her living, and weeps for her now dead. Her career is an incentive and an example to all the workers in our noble art. A woman of genius, industrious and religious, her best education was obtained within the circle of her calling. Almost

masculine in manner, there was yet a gentleness in her which only her intimates could know. The voice which crooned the lullaby of the *Bertrams* so touchingly came from a heart as gentle as infancy. To all who labor in the realms of art, and to my profession most especially, the loss of this day will be a severe one. Bigotry itself must stand abashed before the life of our dead Queen, whose every thought and act were given for years to an art which ignorance and envy have battled against in vain for centuries. To her, our Queen, we say: 'Peace and farewell! We shall not look upon her like again.'"

Mrs. Julia Ward Howe ended her tribute to Miss Cushman thus: —

"No æsthetic crown is loftier than that of the artist who has worthily walked in this true majesty of life upon the scene, receiving at every step the tribute of grateful and admiring hearts.

"Our friend had this true crowning. When we recall her form and action, we must rehearse the lines of Elizabeth Browning: —

> 'Juno, where is now the glory
> Of thy regal port and tread?
> Will they lay, for evermore, thee
> In thy straight, low, golden bed?
> Will thy queendom all lie hid
> Meekly under either lid?'

"But the crown of all crowns is that of *character*, and in this respect our friend's record does not belie her broad brow and generous smile. Laborious, faithful, affectionate, tender, her daily life fulfilled all that her

art-prophecies promised. Rich were they who dwelt within the cordial influence of her words and acts. Bright and sunny was the home which her presence illuminated. Distant friends turned towards her with loving memory, and those who needed and deserved friendship found it in her.

"So let our tributes to her memory be *heart tributes* all. She loved much, served much, earned by hard work a noble reputation, and has left an example in which her race is enriched."

In the autumn of 1880 a monument was placed over the grave of Miss Cushman, at Mount Auburn, by her nephew, Mr. E. C. Cushman of Newport, Rhode Island.

This is a perfectly plain granite shaft, about thirty-three feet in height. It was erected with no ceremonies, and bears no inscription save the name of Charlotte Cushman.

No words written by another can give the full insight into Miss Cushman's nature that her own letters furnish, and Miss Stebbins has permitted the use of such letters as are wished for from her own biography of her friend.

Those which follow reveal much of her personal feeling and her mode of reasoning, and give certain experiences in her own graphic and forceful manner. The first quotations are extracts from her letters to a young friend who was afterwards successful as an actress, and played in both England and America.

CHAPTER XII.

LETTERS.

"I SHOULD advise you to get to work; all *ideal* study of acting, without the *trial* or opportunity of trying our efforts and conceivings upon others, is, in my mind, lost time. Study while you act. Your conception of character can be formed while you read your part, and only practice can tell you whether you are right. You would, after a year of study in your own room, come out unbenefited, save in as far as self-communion ever must make us better and stronger; but this is not what you want just now. *Action* is needed. Your vitality must in some measure work itself off. You must suffer, labor, and wait, before you will be able to grasp the true and the beautiful. You dream of it now; the intensity of life that is in you, the spirit of poetry which makes itself heard by you in indistinct language, needs *work* to relieve itself and be made clear. I feel diffident about giving advice to you, for you know your own nature better than any one else can; but I should say to you, Get to work in the best way you can. All your *country* work will be wretched: you will *faint* by the way; but you must rouse your great strength and struggle on, bearing patiently your cross on the way to your crown! God

bless you and prosper your undertakings. I know the country theatres well enough to know how utterly alone you will be in such companies; but keep up a good heart; we have only to do well what is given us to do, to find heaven. . . .

"I think if you have to wait for a while it will do you no harm. You seem to me quite frantic for immediate work; but teach yourself quiet and repose in the time you are waiting. With half your strength I could bear to wait and labor with myself to conquer *fretting*. The greatest power in the world is shown in conquest over self. More life will be worked out of you by fretting than all the stage-playing in the world. . . .

"I was exceedingly pleased to hear such an account of your first appearance. You were quite right in all that was done, and I am rejoiced at your success. Go on; persevere. You will be sure to do what is right; for your heart is in the right place, your head is sound, your reading has been good. Your mind is so much better and stronger than any other person's whom I have known enter the profession, that your career is plain before you.

"But I will advise you to remain in your native town for a season, or at least the winter. You say you are afraid of remaining among people who know you. Don't have this feeling at all. You will have to be more particular in what you do, and the very feeling that you cannot be indifferent to your audience will make you take more pains. Besides this, you will be at home, which is much better for a time; for then at first you do not have to contend with a strange home

as well as a strange profession. I could talk to you a volume upon this matter, but it is difficult to write. At all events, I hope you will take my counsel and remain at home this winter. It is the most wretched thing imaginable to go from home a novice into such a theatre as any of those in the principal towns.

"Only go on and work hard, and you will be sure to make a good position. With regard to your faults, what shall I say? Why, that you will try hard to overcome them. I don't think they would be perceived, save by those who perhaps imagine that your attachment for me has induced you to join the profession. I have no mannerisms, I hope; therefore any imitation of me can only be in the earnest desire to do what you can do, as well as you can. Write to me often; ask of me what you will; my counsel is worth little, but you shall command it if you need it."

The following letter, written from Rome in 1862, gives the religious views of Miss Cushman, in her own words: —

"To-morrow will be the last day of the year! I am glad when a winter is over, though sad to think I am so much nearer to the end. The days fly by so rapidly; the Saturdays when I must post come round so soon! I stand sometimes appalled at the thought of how my life is flying away, and how soon will come the end to all of this probation, and of how little I have done or am doing to deserve all the blessings by which I am surrounded. But that God is perfect, and that my love for him is without fear, I should be troubled in the thought that I am not doing all I should, *in* this

sphere, to make myself worthy of happiness in the next. Do you quite believe in angels with feather wings and flowing draperies and perfect beauty, and a heaven in the clouds? or do you believe that man, a little lower than the angels, animated by the 'heat spark,' wears out his physical in the improvement of his moral, and that this 'heat spark' then returns to the original centre of all, to be again given out, through its own purification, helping thus to leaven the whole mass, and so doing God's work! — or what do you believe? You say you 'feel the need of a Saviour!' Do you think *Christ* more your Saviour, except that he has been the founder of a creed which has been a sign and symbol for so many who *needed* a sign and symbol? Do you believe that God was more the Father of Christ than he is of you? Do you need any mediator between you and your Father? Can the Saviour Christ help you more than the Saviour Conscience? I don't believe in *Atheism;* so you see one may doubt even disbelief; but I should be glad to know what your creed is, if you put it into any form. Creeds invented by man may and do find echoes, as we find around us those who can give us better counsel than we can find for ourselves in ordinary matters; how much more, then, in those which are purely spiritual! But *creeds are creeds*, after all; and whether propounded by Jesus, or any other of *woman born*, they are simply scaffoldings which surround the temple, and by which different thinkers mount to their distinct and separate entrances. I find it possible to go to any church and find God! A good and earnest man,

though a *self-elected* priest, who leads a pure and noble life, who works for the good of others rather than his own gratification, who leads me to think higher and better things, is my Saviour; all great, good, noble, high aspirations *save me.* Vainglory in myself or my doings, self-assertion, pride, are often but the effects of education; and though they may be and are the clogs of flesh around me, they cannot prevent me from seeing God any and every where, and they cannot prevent me from being *saved, if* I will! Oh, this question is so difficult, so hard; and yet, if we can prove by our lives that we *love* God in our neighbor, it is so easy! We are asked by all believers to love God, and this is *all.* If we love, we cannot wound! God is perfect; we cannot hurt him as we do one another, for he sees in and around and through, and the *motive* is the hurt. I believe that some of the purest lives are among those whom we call *Deists,* — who believe in God, but not in revealed religion. No one can doubt *a cause,* and there must have been a *first cause,* and whether we call it God, or nature, or *law of the universe,* it amounts to the same thing; and, trust me, every human being believes in a God. For me, I believe in all things good coming from God, in all forms, in all ways; my faith is firm in him and his love. I believe in instincts marvellously. I doubt any power to take from me the love of God, and I would guard particularly against the evil effects of injudicious or careless education for myself or others. Original sin is the excess or weakness or folly of parents, which entails upon us evils which we have to

combat, and struggle harder in consequence of; hence the necessity of each human being striving to lead a pure life, a life of unselfishness, a life of devotion to — well — doing everything a human being can do for the largest good of all.

"A devotion which drives one to a nunnery, to a life of self-seclusion, of prayer *actual*, and nothing else, does not seem to me *devotion* such as God needs and wants; and yet it may be that this example is also necessary in God's world, and each man or woman may be doing His work! But I must not write on such topics. I am not sufficiently clear in my expression to help anybody; and I only intended at first to reply to the last sentence of your letter, in which you spoke of your 'need of a Saviour,' and of your going to such or such a church. Well, it matters very little. All thinking human beings (women especially) have to pass through all these thinkings. The only thing to be guarded against is the narrowing influence of Mrs. Grundy. Think in, but be sure also to think *out*. Many young people are apt to jump into one of these enclosures, and then, for *fear*, are afraid to jump or crawl out, — not from fear of God, but fear of the humans around them! Don't suffer yourself to be narrowed in your thinkings. If you do, it is because of some part of your mind not having been healthily exercised, and thus the restraint day by day will cramp you more. I don't like too much this pride of intellect, any more than I do the idea of any and every man being able to be a *priest* simply because he *chooses* that as his vocation. There are many priests who

never see churches, as there are many devils within the fold! Did you ever read very thinkingly 'Spiridion' (George Sand)? She was in this coil when she wrote it, and, being greatly imaginative, of course the book is very wide of the mark for many; but it is possible to get something from it in spite of its mysticism.

"I go to the English Church here, because I think it right to go somewhere, and I cannot understand Italian well enough to follow *their* preaching, though the earnestness and intensity and eloquence of the priests often stirs me to my soul, in spite of the trammels of language. Therefore I go to the English Church; and I observe their observances, because I think it is unkind, by any resistance on my part when I am among them, to raise doubts or questions or remarks when it is unnecessary and productive of no good result. But their scaffolding is no more for me, and does not influence me any more, than that of the Catholic or the Presbyterian. God saw the creatures he created; he knew their capabilities; he will judge us each by our light. The child shut away from light is not answerable for its blindness. Education is the influences around our childhood, not merely books and school, but example, and we are only responsible according to our light. But we must not wilfully shut our eyes when we can be led into the light, which is to be tempered to our abilities; only don't condemn others because they do not see as we do, and we are not able to see with their eyes. Every human being who goes to sleep awakes believing in

God, whatever he may call it. There are more good *Deists* in the world than show themselves, and there is more pride than one wishes to see; but education is to blame, not instinct, and so we have to go so far back to find the original plague-spot, that one is apt to sit down by the wayside in terror at the journey!"

CHAPTER XIII.

[The following paper has been written for this book by Mr. Wm. T. W. Ball, and is a valuable addition to the opinions of critics already quoted.

Many of the most flattering notices which have preceded this were written under the excitement which Miss Cushman's acting had produced, and before the influence of her personal magnetism had passed off; but when one who understands his subject as thoroughly as Mr. Ball does, can write with his enthusiasm regarding Miss Cushman so long after "the silver cord was loosed" and "the golden bowl broken," his praise is praise indeed. — C. E. C.]

It is a fact worthy of note that the most celebrated actors and actresses — the very brightest luminaries of the dramatic profession — in the outset of their careers upon the stage have had no conception of the peculiar bent of their genius, or whether, with the greatest effect and success, they were destined to wear the sock or the buskin. Many of the most famous comedians of our day have started out permeated with naught but tragic aspirations; while, on the other hand, some of the most noted tragedians, in after life, commenced as comedians. The brightest ornament of the American stage (Edwin Forrest) at one time cherished no higher ambition than to become a circus rider, and it is on

record that on one occasion he made a flying leap through a barrel of red fire, singeing his hair and eyebrows terribly.

It is unquestionably true, as the poet Cowper tells us, that

> "God gives to every man
> The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
> That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
> Just in the niche he was ordained to fill."

Of this truth there is a striking example in the professional life of Charlotte Cushman. The Supreme Power better knew her destiny and her great capacities than she did herself. The woman proposed a life on the lyric stage; the Deity disposed of the life as that of the grandest tragic actress which America, up to the present day, has produced. Becoming, from the force of unforeseen circumstances, unadapted for the career of a great songstress, Miss Cushman, instinctively as it were, following the bent of her genius, developed into the matchless actress. In the outset of her career upon the stage it was fortunate for Miss Cushman that she received a thorough schooling in all the intricate *minutiæ* of her profession, — a schooling which is as essentially necessary to the development of the actor and actress as are light and heat to the development of the flower. "Lowliness is young ambition's ladder," and Miss Cushman, with more ability, with more true genius, than all the fledgling *tragédiennes* of the present day put together, did not hesitate to commence on the very lowest round of her profession, in order the more securely to reach its topmost

height. No matter how much of native ability an aspirant for dramatic fame may possess, nor with how much of purely mimetic talent that aspirant may be endowed, it is nevertheless next to an impossibility that such an one can step from the drawing-room or the seminary on to the stage, and successfully contest for its honors with the matured, the cultivated, and the well-grounded artist. No woman who has graced the stage, within the present century at least — a century redolent of the genius of Sarah Siddons — was possessed of a greater capacity for such a feat, admitting for the moment its possibility, than Charlotte Cushman; but the strength of her intellect caused her, when on the very threshold of her profession, not to ignore the fact that, recognized as her abilities even then were, there was something to be learned outside of mere declamation and the faculty of making a few startling "points." On the contrary, she bore in mind that the fundamental necessity, the chief corner-stone, as it were, of the dramatic structure she was about to rear, should consist not of a superficial but of a thorough and absolute knowledge of the "business" and traditions of the stage. The drudgery of the profession must often have proved galling to a woman of the strength of intellect which Miss Cushman possessed, but, believing in its necessity, her way was thenceforth

> "Like to the Pontick sea
> Whose icy current and compulsive course
> Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on."

I have heard Miss Cushman say that in her early days upon the stage she had no especial predilection

for any one particular line of dramatic business. She was a firm believer, not alone in her own powers, but that her destiny was to make a name and fame. Her idea was (she was then a young woman, let it be borne in mind, of about one and twenty) that she would be equally good in tragedy and comedy. Those who remember her in the very plenitude of her strength, people who are competent to judge understandingly of dramatic representations, and possessed of the ability to analyze character and appreciate motives, will confess that Miss Cushman's comedy parts, charmingly as they were conceived, and abounding as they did in touches of tender grace, bore, in general, no comparison to her tragic assumptions. While she had a *penchant* for occasionally appearing in comedy down almost to her latest days on the stage, and notably as *Mrs. Simpson*, in John Poole's comedy of "Simpson & Co." in which she "stood up peerless," yet she herself was free to own that her highest achievements and most pronounced successes were made in Shakespearian tragedy.

It was in

> "My salad days,
> When I was green in judgment,"

and so long ago as 1837, that I first saw Miss Cushman play. It was at the Tremont Theatre, then under the management of that most accomplished actor and manager, Thomas Barry. The play was "Macbeth," and Miss Cushman was the *Lady*. 'T was a coincidence that this should have been the first as well as the last part which it was my good fortune to see her

perform. Even at this early period of her career on the stage, which up to this time had covered but three seasons, she is said to have given evidence of the dawning of that greatness which she ultimately achieved. I have heard good judges of acting say, and especially the late Edward D. Clarke, that while at this time she displayed great strength of intellect, and a faculty of firmly grasping the parts she undertook, that, nevertheless, her performances were, when tried by the standard of those of other actresses who had preceded her, crude and coarse. Even so late as 1843 it would appear that she had not developed that perfect finish as a tragic actress which later years brought, and there was color for the remark made by that highly accomplished actor, Macready, in his diary, under date of New York, October 23, of the year above mentioned: "The Miss Cushman, who acted *Lady Macbeth*, interested me much. She has to learn her art." But Macready recognized her abilities as beyond question; or otherwise, subsequently to this, he would not have invited her to play with him again in New York, and later in Boston, and still later to honor him by her support in England. During her stay at the Tremont Miss Cushman was cast for almost everything. She even played such "breeches parts," as they are termed, as *Henry*, in "Speed the Plough," and *Fortunato Falconi*, in the charming little drama, "Matteo Falconi." It was about this time that I saw her as *Madge Wildfire*, in the "Heart of Midlothian," a performance in which she was very effective. This was not Boucicault's "Jeanie Deans," but an older piece

founded on Sir Walter Scott's great novel. I can to this day distinctly remember Miss Cushman's singing the various snatches of old ballads with which the part abounds, and the entire rendition was one of strong melodramatic tendencies. Nothing could be more natural in after years than the transition from this part to that of *Meg Merrilies*, although in the one we had the fulness and the elasticity of youth, and in the other the simulation of almost tottering senility. Later in the season, when that delight of the juveniles, "The Forty Thieves," was produced for the holidays, Miss Cushman was the *Morgiana*, and her songs and duets with *Ganem* were invariably encored, while her dancing was well worth seeing. I have instanced this simply to show that in the study of her art Miss Cushman was thorough, and that she was well grounded in all its most minute particulars. In those days, if an aspirant had any dramatic instincts whatever, they were certain of being brought out, for then there was a school for acting; while now, more 's the pity, legitimate acting, with but a few honorable exceptions — to such an extent has the public taste been perverted by the spectacular and meretricious drama — has become almost a lost art; and so much is such a state of things deplored by the worthies of the stage, that within a twelvemonth I have heard that well-graced actor, the Nestor of his profession, Mr. John Gilbert, deplore the fact that the tendencies of dramatic art were such that, in his opinion, five years hence it would be almost an impossibility to cast a standard tragedy or comedy, with due regard to its proper and complete representation.

It is a singular coincidence that the day upon which these lines are written (Dec. 20, 1881) is the fortieth anniversary of the production at the Tremont Theatre (Dec. 20, 1841) of Boucicault's ever popular comedy, "London Assurance," and Miss Cushman was the *Lady Gay Spanker*. The piece was well cast to the stock company. Gilbert was the *Sir Harcourt Courtley;* William Creswick, still on the stage in England, and the then leading man of the Tremont, was the *Charles Courtley;* that superb light comedian, J. M. Field, who will be remembered by theatre-goers of the present day, for his inimitable performance of *Hawkesley* in "Still Waters Run Deep," was the *Dazzle;* and the fine eccentric comedian, William F. Johnson, the *Mark Meddle*. The piece could not fail of having a grand representation with such a cast, but it was the general impression that neither Miss Cushman nor Mr. Gilbert were fully up to the requirements. Long afterwards, when I saw Miss Cushman play *Lady Gay*, and felt myself somewhat competent to judge in the matter, I made up my mind that the performance was a spasmodic one. It was good only in spots. It was heavy. The part is the embodiment of pure comedy, and should be made as light as thistledown. Miss Cushman's face and figure were greatly against her, and instead of floating through the part on the very top-sparkle of joyousness, she seemed to me constrained, severely serious, and even tragical, as compared in the performance with other actresses I have seen. The same remarks will apply to her *Constance* in "The Love Chase," and to the greater portion of

her *Juliana* in the "Honeymoon," though I am free to confess that in this latter part when she assumed her true position as the *Duchess Aranza*, there was a dignity and a majesty in her appearance and acting, which I never saw approached before or since.

At the close of this season Miss Cushman left Boston, and when next I saw her in that city, it was at the Melodeon, now the Gaiety Theatre, which had been fitted up as a temporary theatre by a Mr. Leander Rodney. This was in the fall of 1844. The season was a brief one, lasting, I think, but three weeks. The attraction was William Charles Macready. Miss Cushman was, of course, the principal female support, and during the season she appeared in such parts as *Queen Gertrude* in "Hamlet," *Lady Macbeth*, *Julie de Mortemar* in "Richelieu," *Mrs. Oakley* in "The Jealous Wife," *Emilia* in "Othello," *Goneril* in "King Lear," etc. This, it will be seen, was a broad range of characters, and eminently adapted to show the lady's versatility. That she had improved, and that greatly, since last she graced the Boston boards, was beyond a peradventure. I think her connection with Macready had much to do with this improvement; for she certainly could not have been associated with this most accomplished and scholarly artist, without appreciating, and, in fact, imbibing many of his ideas. In any event, she had become more subdued, and, as a consequence, more natural. Her *Gertrude* was the finest I ever saw, while her *Emilia* was something wonderful, indeed a new revelation. Never have I heard the great speech —

"The Moor 's abus'd by some most villanous knave,
Some base, notorious knave, some scurvy fellow : —
O, heaven, that such companions thou 'dst unfold;
And put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascal naked through the world,
Even from the east to the west,"

delivered with such emphasis of gesture and such grandeur of tone. At its close she "took the stage," and she held it, too, being for the time the great central figure, in which all the others were merged. The look of withering scorn and contempt which she flung at *Iago* was the very sublimity of acting. But her whole performance was of a piece with this, while her death scene was very tender and pathetic. It will be remembered that in a strictly dramatic ratio, *Emilia* ranks as the fifth part in importance in the tragedy. *Othello*, *Iago*, *Cassio*, and *Desdemona* take precedence of it. In a stock company it is invariably assigned to the lady who plays what is termed, in the technicality of the stage, the "leading heavies." The part possesses strong dramatic situations and abounds in telling speeches, that would in themselves carry any performance, no matter how ordinary, to a satisfactory conclusion. When I assert that it has been my good fortune to have seen Miss Cushman elevate the part to the first consideration in the presentation of the tragedy, an idea of her greatness in it may be readily conceived. Her *Goneril* was another strong piece of acting, and in it she made every line tell. It is an unsympathetic and thankless character to perform, but at Miss Cushman's hands it received every consideration. I can

well remember the audiences which filled the Melodeon on the occasion of every performance during this brief though memorable season. There nightly were to be seen Longfellow, Lowell, and George S. Hillard; Thomas H. Perkins and Abbott Lawrence and the Otises and the Winthrops; Charles Sumner and Rufus Choate and the Curtises; while towering above all was the grand and imposing form of Daniel Webster. The very best classes of the community — its intellect as well as its wealth — were represented; and, I doubt, if since then such cultivated audiences ever assembled within the walls of a theatre in this city to honor the drama in the persons of its then foremost representatives.

From the close of this engagement till the fall of 1849, covering a period of five years, Miss Cushman was not again seen in Boston until her return fresh from her English triumphs, when she appeared at the Federal Street Theatre for a three weeks' engagement, under the management of Humphrey W. Bland. She brought with her, as her support, Mr. Charles W. Couldock, a most excellent actor, whose performances are still a delight to all who witness them. This engagement of Miss Cushman's was one continuous ovation, and the houses were crowded nightly. It was at this time that I first saw her in that lugubrious and tear-compelling piece, the "Misanthrope and Repentance," of the German Kotzebue, which is more familiar to American play-goers as "The Stranger." I had previously seen Charles Kean and his wife in this lachrymose drama (which has, I trust, been permanently

banished from the stage), and justly celebrated as Mrs. Kean was for her fine performance of *Mrs. Haller*, I incline to the belief that Miss Cushman was much her superior, and that her entire performance was more satisfying and much more effective. Miss Cushman wrought on every feeling which the audience possessed. Pathos, passion, remorse, repentance, maternal affection, were alike to her, and all were touched with a master hand and by the mighty inspiration of genius. So powerful was this performance, so impressive was it, so much did it touch the sensibilities of the auditors, that I have known ladies to be removed from the theatre in hysterics, and have seen strong-framed and strong-brained men weeping like children. Indeed, so much did Miss Cushman herself enter into the spirit of the part that I have, on more than one occasion, seen

"Cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks."

There was a whole lifetime of wretchedness and woe in the two-and-a-half hours' performance, and when at last the curtain fell on it the intensity of the relief was most welcome. It is possible that in my day there may be as good a representative of this part as was Miss Cushman; but good or bad, I trust I may be spared the infliction of ever again being called upon to witness this most morbidly melancholy play. It was during this engagement that I saw Miss Cushman enact for the first time the character of *Ion* in the late Justice Talfourd's play of that name. This tragedy, so strictly classical as it is, has now scarce a foothold on the

stage. It was originally produced at Covent Garden Theatre, London, on the 26th of May, 1836, and Macready was the original *Ion*. Several years subsequent Miss Ellen Tree took up the part, and in a measure made it her own. For the present time the play may be looked upon as "too preachy," yet it has some strong dramatic situations, and the characters are boldly drawn. Of Macready's performance it was said by the author that "by the graces of beautiful elocution he beguiled the audience to receive the drama as belonging to a range of associations which are no longer linked with the living world, but which retain an undying interest of a gentler cast, as a thing which might have been; and then, by his fearful power of making the fantastic real, he gradually rendered the whole possible — probable — true!" This language could apply with equal justice to the performance of Miss Cushman. While her elocution was faultless, she invested her various scenes with so much that was life-like as, indeed, to make "the fantastic real." In looks she was the very part itself, and though I object to women unsexing themselves on the stage, there was so much to be commended in this entire performance of Miss Cushman as to completely overshadow what might be looked upon by many as a trivial matter. During this engagement Miss Cushman performed *Pauline* in "The Lady of Lyons," by no means a good piece of acting, and I think for the first time in this city, appeared as *Meg Merrilies*, — but of this I will speak hereafter. I feel somewhat astonished when I look back, in contemplating the amount of work which

Miss Cushman at this time would accomplish in the course of a night. Now, a single play, occupying a scant two hours and a half in representation, suffices for an entertainment, to witness which an inordinately large admission fee is charged. At prices nearly fifty per cent less than those which obtain at present, Miss Cushman has played, in one evening, *Queen Katherine* and *Mrs. Simpson*, or *Lady Macbeth* and *Juliana!* Of a certainty Miss Cushman was a great worker physically as well as mentally.

But I fear I should become wearisome did I dwell on all the parts which I have seen Miss Cushman play, and in general terms I will assume that, in the range of legitimate tragedy, there can be no doubt that her *Lady Macbeth* and *Queen Katherine* stand out in the boldest relief. Of these two parts it is safe to say that her *Queen Katherine* was the most finished performance. It was indeed "one entire and perfect chrysolite" with "no hinge or loop to hang a doubt upon." Certainly, so far as the stage of the present day is concerned, the part died with Miss Cushman. It is possible that the future has in store other worthy representatives of *Queen Katherine*, but I question if the equal (assuredly not the superior) of Miss Cushman will ever again be witnessed in it. The great charm of this glorious assumption was found in its evenness and perfect naturalness throughout. There was no overstraining for effect, and if there were times when an unusually strong point was made, it was made with such exquisite *finesse* that in no degree whatever did it overstep the modesty of nature. A familiar instance

of this will be recalled in the last scene of the second act of the play ("King Henry the Eighth"), wherein the Court, together with *Wolsey* and the Pope's legate, the *Cardinal Campeius*, are assembled for the purpose of adjudicating on the question of *Katherine's* divorce from the King. The *Queen* has made her noble plea to *Henry* for justice and delay until she can advise with her friends in Spain, when *Wolsey* interposes with the speech, —

> "You have here, lady,
> (And of your choice), these reverend fathers; men
> Of singular integrity and learning,
> Yea, the elect of the land, who are assembled
> To plead your cause. It shall be therefore bootless
> That longer you desire the court; as well
> For your own quiet, as to rectify
> What is unsettled in the King."

Campeius also takes up the question, saying,

> "His grace
> Hath spoken well, and justly: therefore, madam,
> It 's fit this royal session do proceed;
> And that, without delay, their arguments
> Be now produced and heard."

Miss Cushman, representing *Katherine* as looking upon *Wolsey* as her enemy, listened to his speech with a half contemptuous sneer, but to the words of *Campeius* she paid profound and deferential attention. At their conclusion she drew herself up to her extreme height and, swinging round so as to face *Wolsey*, — with flashing eye, extended arm, a grandeur of gesture befitting one who was

"A queen, — certain
The daughter of a king,"

and in a voice whose every tone was full of the majesty of command, — addressed him in the words

"Lord Cardinal, —
To you I speak,"

with such startling effect and vivid emphasis as to completely electrify her audience and to call forth the heartiest applause. The sudden transition from almost humbleness to imperious command was one of the finest things I have ever witnessed on the stage. I do not think that an actress of lesser note than Miss Cushman could have made so fine a point without its degenerating into clap-trap. In her case it was such a natural, such a womanly, yea, such a queenly outburst — the tones of the voice and the dignity of the action were so harmonious — that the brilliance of the point in no wise overshadowed the evenness or the exquisite finish with which the preceding and succeeding portions of the scene were portrayed. Equally fine was her reply to *Griffith*, just previous to her exit. She is departing the court when he apprises her that she is called back. She replies to him

"What need you note it? pray you keep your way:
When *you* are called, return."

The emphasis on this last "you" was given with such an admixture of petulance, contempt, and even disgust that it invested her closing lines

> " Now, the Lord help,
> They vex me past my patience! — pray you, pass on:
> I will not tarry; no, nor ever more,
> Upon this business, my appearance make
> In any of their courts,"

with an impressiveness and a significance which they would not otherwise have obtained. Great as Miss Cushman unquestionably was in this scene, I none the less incline to the opinion that her finest work was found in her interview with the two *Cardinals* in the first scene of the third act, and in her death in the second scene of the fourth act. I have looked upon many a death scene on the stage as portrayed by Rachel and Ristori and the hosts of lesser lights, both male and female, but never saw anything more impressive than this of Miss Cushman's. I am not aware that the specific disease of which *Katherine* died has been made mention of by any of her historians. Miss Strickland speaks of her malady as an incurable disease. Miss Cushman's treatment of the death, strictly in accordance as it was with historical tradition, would seem to convey the idea that the decease was caused by consumption, and having this idea in view, the working up of the entire " business " of the scene was a marvellous piece of stage effect, in no degree inconsistent with nature. The dissolution was so gradual that, from the very opening of the scene, one entirely unfamiliar with the history of *Katherine* could not fail of being prepared for what was certain to ensue; and when the culmination took place the impression left was so profoundly sad that tears became almost a

necessity to the audience as affording relief to the intense tension to which their sympathies were wrought. And in this respect the result was the direct opposite from that attained in the portrayal of *Mrs. Haller*.

I look upon the *Lady Macbeth* of Miss Cushman as a massive performance, as great in its way as is the *Othello* of Tommaso Salvini. I think it was more strongly imbued with the true Shakespearian spirit than was the representation of the same character by Mrs. Siddons, as handed down to us by tradition. This lady was in the habit of wearing a blond wig in the part, and of making of this sternest of women, on the evidence of Thomas Campbell, a delicate beauty. Indeed, in her "Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth," Mrs. Siddons says: "In this astonishing creature one sees a woman in whose bosom the passion of ambition has almost obliterated all the characteristics of human nature; in whose composition are associated all the subjugating powers of intellect, and all the charms and graces of personal beauty. You will probably not agree with me as to the character of that beauty; yet, perhaps this difference of opinion will be entirely attributable to the difficulty of your imagination disengaging itself from that idea of the person of her representative which you have been so long accustomed to contemplate. According to my notion, it is of that character which I believe is generally allowed to be most captivating to the other sex — fair, feminine, nay, perhaps even fragile, —

> 'Fair as the forms that, wove in Fancy's loom,
> Float in light visions round the poet's head.'"

It is very certain that Miss Cushman did not agree with her famous prototype as to the character of the beauty of *Lady Macbeth*, for in her delineation of the part she appeared almost in her own proper person, which I must be permitted to say, albeit grand and imposing, had no vestige of what was fair, feminine, or fragile. In person Miss Cushman was as robust as her performance of *Lady Macbeth* was masculine, and she governed her pliant lord, who was so "infirm of purpose," by the force of a superior will rather than by blandishments or personal attractions. There was one little touch in Miss Cushman's embodiment of the character that, so far as my experience goes, was entirely overlooked by other actresses. This was in the only interview (Act I. Scene 6) the lady has with "the gracious *Duncan*." All the other *Lady Macbeths* that I have seen invariably met the *King* in a fawning and cringing manner. Miss Cushman alone, while paying due homage to *Duncan* as her sovereign, still preserved the dignity of her standing; and, though playing the hostess to perfection, she never for a moment permitted her audience to lose sight of the fact that socially and by birth she was the peer of the King, — being, as she was, the granddaughter of a sometime King of Scotland, Kenneth IV., killed, in 1003, fighting against Malcolm II. who was the grandfather of *Duncan*. Aside from this I cannot call to mind that Miss Cushman invented any new points in her delineation of the character, which was, with this exception, of the traditional order, except a very delicate bit of business at the close of the reading of the letter of her husband

(Act I. Scene 5), wherein she pertinently suited the action to the word and the word to the action by laying it to her heart, in putting the missive into her bosom, instead of holding it in her hand as has been customary with all the other representatives of the part I have seen. I have spoken of the masculine element which pervaded her interpretation of this part; but after all, this was at times relieved by the loving tenderness and solicitude of the wife, which occasionally asserted itself above the ambition of the woman. Particularly noticeable was this in the second scene of the third act, where the reading of the lines —

> "How now, my lord? Why do you keep alone,
> Of sorriest fancies your companions making?
> Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
> With them they think on?"

and in the subsequent speech —

> "Come on,
> Gentle my lord; sleek o'er your rugged looks;
> Be bright and jovial 'mong your guests to-night."

And then too in the Banquet scene, what a whole history was there conveyed in her pronouncing the line —

> "You lack the season of all natures, sleep,"

to the man who had murdered sleep and as a consequence should sleep no more! In the Murder scene she was superlatively great. She made all that was to be made of that one little piece of filial affection which she displays when, in speaking of the assassination of *Duncan*, she says —

> "Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept, I had done 't;"

while the tones of her voice in speaking the words —

"Infirm of purpose,
"Give me the daggers!"

and her action in grasping them, were as those of a fury. Then too on her return from having blood-smeared

"The faces of the grooms withal,
For it must seem their guilt,"

what contempt there was as she showed her hands, red with the blood of *Duncan*, and almost hissed out the lines —

"My hands are of your color: but I shame
To wear a heart so white!"

Her exit at the close of this scene was very powerful as she dragged — I may say almost lifted — the broken-down *Macbeth* from the stage. To be sure all this was art, but it was the acme of art. It was that species of art which finds its counterpart in nature. Miss Cushman obtained a well deserved notoriety for her Sleep-walking scene, and of a verity it was a superb piece of acting. I think, however, that in this particular instance she was outdone by Madame Ristori, who in this portrayal struck me as having reached the very outermost limit of dramatic conception and execution. Taken as a whole, however, it is not unnatural to assume that Miss Cushman's delineation of *Lady Macbeth* could never be improved upon; and in this connection I will say that the late Edward L. Davenport, next to Edwin Forrest the most accomplished of native actors, told me that Mac-

ready (the best *Macbeth* who ever graced the boards) informed him that Miss Cushman's performance of *Lady Macbeth* was a most consummate piece of art, so powerful in its nature, so subtile in its conception as to make him feel, when on the stage with her, that he was less than a creature of secondary consideration, — in truth a mere thing of naught.

If I have proved too far extended in my remarks upon these two characters, my excuse must be that I consider them the greatest of Miss Cushman's purely legitimate triumphs.

I hold Miss Cushman — barring the Balcony scene, in which I must confess she was eclipsed by Signor Rossi — to be the best *Romeo* I ever saw. Best, because as a woman she knew what love was, and as a woman knew how love should be made. She wooed *Juliet* as she herself would be wooed, and hence her performance had no element of cold formality in it, but was impulsive and ardent, while constrained within the limits of a modest and well-bred discretion. To the credit of Miss Cushman be it said, she was the first who ever gave us a version of "Romeo and Juliet" in any way approaching the completeness with which the tragedy emanated from the mind of the great master. The restorations of the text which she made were as judicious as they were absolutely necessary to a complete representation. By those restorations the glorious light comedy part of *Mercutio* was rounded to fulness. *Escalus*, the Prince of Verona, was reinstated, and the cause of the family feud which existed between the *Capulets* and *Montagues* was made appar-

ent to all. It was at the National Theatre, Boston, that I saw Miss Cushman play *Romeo*, the *Juliet* being a Miss Anderton. It is needless to say that the performance was an unequivocal success, and as a whole wellnigh faultless. But I had the same objection to it that I found with *Ion*, to wit the needlessness of the lady's unsexing herself. There were certainly female characters enough in her *répertoire* to suffice for the satisfaction of the most exacting audiences, and hence I never could see the necessity of her wearing the breeches.

I have intimated that in the delineation of comedy Miss Cushman was by no means so successful as in her portrayal of the sterner shades of humanity. This fact I think she recognized herself, for in the latter years of her career she almost completely abandoned this peculiar walk of the drama. Her *Rosalind* and *Beatrice* were at the best but heavy assumptions, and she was wanting in that exuberance and buoyancy of spirit which made the performances of Mrs. George H. Barrett, Mrs. Charles Kean, and Mrs. Julia Bennett Barrow so exceptionally fine. Her *Portia* was great only in its declamatory portions. In the Trial scene she was perfection, and her delivery of the great Plea for Mercy dwells in my mind as a superior piece of dramatic reading, never excelled by that best of Shakespearian readers, Frances Kemble Butler.

Great as Miss Cushman was as a legitimate actress, I think her greatness went a step beyond when she entered the field of melodrama; and I think moreover that her fame as an exponent of *Meg Merrilies* and

Nancy (in the adaptation of Dickens's "Oliver Twist") will live long after her memory as a *Lady Macbeth* and a *Queen Katherine* is forgotten. Her *Meg* was of course the creation of Charlotte Cushman, rather than the conception of Sir Walter Scott. Such a character as Miss Cushman presented might have had an existence, but of that there is a grave doubt. No one can for a moment question the picturesqueness of the entire performance, the originality of the creation, or the exquisite artistic "make-up," which was in itself a study. I know that she preferred in her latter days, on account of her infirm state of health and her great love for the Shakespearian drama, to abandon this part, as she had years previously abandoned that of the abandoned *Nancy*. But in this respect Miss Cushman could scarcely be looked upon as her own mistress. She had the interest of her managers to consult, and they, be sure, looked constantly to their pockets. Her artistic desires had often to give way to the importunities of the manager for increased nightly receipts. As *Meg* or *Nancy* she would invariably attract an overflowing audience, — as *Lady Macbeth* or *Katherine* a two-thirds house. Pocket therefore was more potent than preference. But the most intense of all her creations was *Nancy*. It was the perfection of realism, and vividly fascinating despite its repulsiveness. Her delineation of this character, in connection with the *Bill Sikes* of William H. Smith, Edward L. Davenport, or John Studley, and the *Fagin* of James W. Wallack the younger, was one of the greatest of dramatic treats. The powerful scenes of

Dickens were no longer a fiction: they became a reality. Of late years Miss Lucille Western made great fame as *Nancy*. She was not without talent; but oh! the gulf between her and Charlotte Cushman!

I doubt if there was ever a more conscientious actress known. I do not think she ever took a liberty with her author, — or, in a scene which she controlled, would allow a liberty to be taken by another. A "gag" was her abhorrence. Ever uppermost in her mind were those lines, which should be emblazoned in letters of gold in every green-room of the land: "And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them: for there be of them, that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too: though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered." In this connection I may say that I was standing at the wing on the stage of the Globe Theatre one day during a rehearsal of "Guy Mannering." A well known comedian was to play the *Dominie Sampson*. In a scene which he had with *Meg Merrilies* he introduced some new business, which was by no means an improvement on the old. Miss Cushman stopped him at once. "Mr. P——," said she, "if you have any new business or any gags to introduce in this scene, please reserve them until I have left the stage!"

Miss Cushman was a close and thorough student. There was nothing whatever of the surface actress about her, and the enviable position which she attained was the result of patient, laborious, and intelligent

application. To her latest day she was a student, and as a dramatic scholar she was "a ripe and good one." In conclusion allow me to say — and I bear in mind the great claims of many a gifted actress — that in my estimation Charlotte Cushman, take her for all in all, was the grandest English-speaking actress I ever saw. It may be said of her, as Thomas Campbell so beautifully said of John Philip Kemble : —

"Hers was the spell o'er hearts
Which only acting lends, —
The youngest of the sister arts,
Where all their beauty blends.
For ill can Poetry express
Full many a tone of thought sublime;
And Painting, mute and motionless,
Steals but a glance of time;
But, by the mighty Actor brought,
Illusion's perfect triumphs come, —
Verse ceases to be airy thought,
And Sculpture to be dumb."

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